



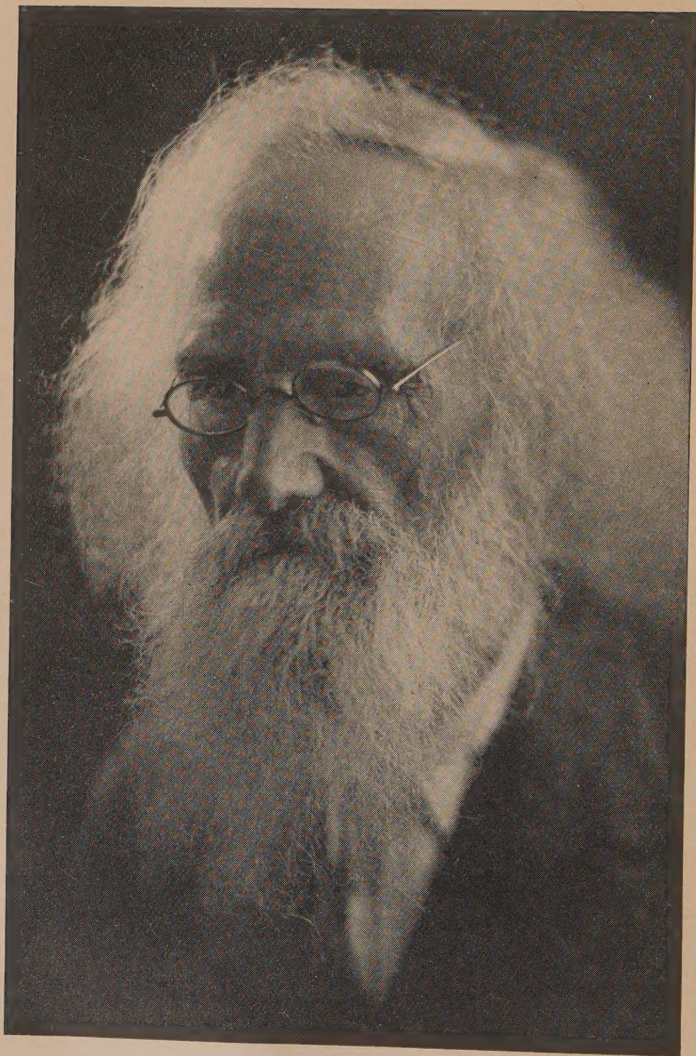
OX-TEAM DAYS • ON THE • OREGON TRAIL

Meeker
Driggs

• In Pioneer Life Series •

Cornelia

**Ox-Team Days on the
Oregon Trail**



Ezra Meeker.

Pioneer Life Series

Ox-Team Days on the Oregon Trail

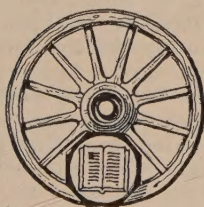
by

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in collaboration with

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*Illustrated with drawings
by William H. Jackson
and F. N. Wilson
and with photographs*

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THE Oregon Trail — what suggestion the name carries of the heroic toil of pioneers! Yet a few years ago the route of the trail was only vaguely known. Then public interest was awakened by the report that one of the very men who had made the trip to Oregon in the old days was traversing the trail once more, moving with ox team and covered wagon from his home in the state of Washington, and marking the old route as he went. The man with the ox team was Ezra Meeker. He went on to the capital, where Mr. Roosevelt, then President, met him with joy. Then he traversed the long trail once more with team and wagon — back to that Northwest which he had so long made his home. This book gives Mr. Meeker's story of his experiences on the Oregon Trail when it was new, and again when, advanced in years, he retraced the journey of his youth that Americans might ever know where led the footsteps of the pioneers.

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INTRODUCTION TO EZRA MEEKER

AMERICA needs no introduction to Ezra Meeker. His name is almost a household word in our land, linked inseparably with the thrilling story of the old Oregon Trail. At the age of seventy-six, when most men are ready to lay down their burdens, this intrepid veteran reblazed that historic highway, retracing it with an ox-drawn prairie schooner all the way from the Pacific to the Mississippi.

His object in this venture was to rouse our country to mark that famous trail and to pay its delayed tribute to the pioneers,

Whose stern impassioned stress,
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness.

For more than twenty years Ezra Meeker carried on with the single purpose to save in vivid and enduring forms the epic story of the westward march of America.

He used other picturesque methods to arrest the attention of our busy nation. After this first trek eastward with his ox team, he made several other trips by automobile. Then finally, when almost ninety-five years of age, he stirred the country by flying with an army pilot over the old trails from the state of Washington to Washington, our capital. This airplane trip was made at the rate of over a hundred miles an hour. When he had taken the trail first as a young pioneer with his wife and babe in the covered wagon, drawn by his patient, plodding oxen, he had made only about two miles an hour.

The spirit of Ezra Meeker and the Western pioneers he typified flashed forth one day just after this challenging airplane flight. Some of his friends were celebrating his ninety-fifth birthday with him in a New York hotel. One of them, called on to introduce the guest of honor, took occasion naturally to speak of some of the achievements of the man whose life span reached from ox team to airplane. The aged youth grew a bit restive as he listened to the eulogy. At last, given his chance to speak, Ezra Meeker fairly bounded to his feet and brushed aside the words of praise with this remark: "I am not going to talk of what I have done, but of what I intend to do."

Then he launched into his plan to win the support of our government for the monumenting of the old trail. Not many weeks thereafter the bill he had fathered was passed unanimously by Congress and signed by President Coolidge. It provided for the minting of six million fifty-cent memorial coins to be used for promoting the cause for which the old pioneer was giving his "last full measure of devotion." Confident now that success was at last to crown his efforts, he leaped joyously into the work of consummating his plans.

His final venture to keep up the momentum of interest was made in what he called an "Oxmobile." Given a fine automobile chassis by Henry Ford, he had built on this the replica of the body of a prairie schooner. In this conveyance, linking past with present, he made a trip into old New England, and then began what was to be his sunset journey over

the old trail he loved. Illness, however, overtook him en route, and the journey had to be completed in the stateroom of a Pullman.

He arrived at Seattle, his home city, all but spent. A few weeks later, surrounded by children and friends, Ezra Meeker passed peacefully away. His dying words, whispered to his daughter, were: "I am not quite ready to go; my work is unfinished." When he was buried in Puyallup, the city he had founded in early days, the old prairie schooner he had used in reblazing the Oregon Trail was pressed again into service. Now, drawn by a yoke of oxen, and filled with flowers given by the school children, it followed the old pioneer to his last resting place.

This loving tribute by the boys and girls of his old home town was like another I had seen bestowed on him ten years before when I visited the schools of Puyallup with the aged veteran. Everywhere we went the children received "Uncle Ezra," as they affectionately called him, with expressions of delight. He was a great favorite with them, not only at home but everywhere. One night, indeed, when I was walking with him through one of the streets of New York where groups of children were playing, a youngster suddenly cried, "Oh, here comes Santa Claus!" A moment later the kiddies were flocking around the old pioneer, seeming in truth to believe he was Santa. He certainly looked the part, with his snowy hair and beard; and his spirit of good cheer with the little folk was in keeping with that of jolly Saint Nick.

His faith was ever strong that the great cause of

honoring the pioneers and saving their stories would be accomplished through the children. Groups of them in various towns along the old trail had been the first to help him raise markers and monuments. The schoolboys and schoolgirls had taken a most active interest in gathering the precious relics and manuscripts that give first-hand pictures of pioneer life. It was to young America he felt that he could look with confidence for the carrying on of the patriotic work of preserving with fidelity and vibrancy the epic of the winning of our Farther West.

His desire to give to the boys and girls that story as he had lived it resulted in the writing of this book. Had he done nothing more, he would have done a rich part in making the true story of our Western pioneers live for all time. After all, the most vivid and lasting monuments are not those of stone and bronze, but of living books. And here is a book, to quote one of America's poets, "which was not merely written; it was lived." Through its pages history is humanized; geography is vitalized. This little volume commemorates the sterling lives of the covered-wagon pioneers by portraying in simple, truthful language their deeds of homely heroism. It makes the thrilling story of the old Oregon Trail live again; it breathes the spirit of practical patriotism; it inspires a deeper love for America.

HOWARD R. DRIGGS

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PART ONE

FROM OHIO TO THE COAST

THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRAIL

WORN deep and wide by the migration of three hundred thousand people, lined by the graves of twenty thousand dead, witness of romance and tragedy, the Oregon Trail is unique in history and will always be sacred to the memories of the pioneers. Reaching the summit of the Rockies upon an evenly distributed grade of eight feet to the mile, following the watercourse of the River Platte and tributaries to within two miles of the summit of the South Pass, through the Rocky Mountain barrier, descending to the tidewaters of the Pacific, through the Valleys of the Snake and the Columbia, the route of the Oregon Trail points the way for a great National Highway from the Missouri River to Puget Sound: a roadway of greatest commercial importance, a highway of military preparedness, a route for a lasting memorial to the pioneers, thus combining utility and sentiment.

Ezra Meeker



The old Meeker homestead near Elizabeth, New Jersey.

CHAPTER ONE

BACK TO BEGINNINGS

OUR old family Bible bears record in my father's faded handwriting that I was born in Huntsville, Ohio, on December 29, 1830. That was, at this writing, nearly ninety-eight years ago. Almost a century of life! What eventful history comes to my mind as I think back through all those years!

In 1830 our country was still in its pioneer beginnings. Andrew Jackson, the fiery frontiersman, was President. The first railroad, a kind of tramway a few miles long, had just been built. Chicago and St. Louis were yet mere trading posts. The vast region west of the Mississippi was untamed territory. There were no typewriters, no sewing machines, no mowers or threshers, no telegraph lines, no telephones or electric lights. And as for automobiles, motion pictures, airplanes, and radios — the first of

these were nearly seventy-five years away. It has been my privilege to live through the days that have brought these and hundreds of other marvelous inventions to help transform pioneer America into the mighty modern nation it is today.

This wondrous progress is an outgrowth of the heroic work of the pioneers of our land. It is meet that their story shall not be forgotten; so I have been persuaded to follow the example of the ancient and honored scribe, Ezra, after whom I was named by my pious parents, and write the story so far as I know it from actual experience. Out of the true and simple record of nearly a hundred years of life may come something that will help the youth of this and other generations to appreciate the making of America.

The Meekers first came to America from England in 1637. In 1665 one of my ancestors settled near Elizabeth, New Jersey, building there a very substantial house which stood till almost 1910. More than a score of hardy soldiers from this family fought for America in the War of Independence and were noted for their strength, their steady habits, and patriotic ardor.

My mother's name was Phoebe Baker. English and Welsh strains of blood ran in her veins. Both she and father were hard-working, God-fearing pioneers. I have known mother to endure long hours of severe household labor without much discomfort. She would often sit up late at night mending and darning, and yet be up in the morning at four to resume her labors. Father, I recall, once

worked for three years, eighteen hours a day, as a miller. For this hard service he received twenty dollars a month and bran for the cow. Yet out of the ordeal he came seemingly as strong and healthy as he entered it.

Small wonder that with such parents and with such early surroundings I am able to say that for fifty-eight years I was never sick in bed a single day. I, too, have endured long hours of labor during my whole life, and I can truthfully say that I have always liked to do my work and that I have never watched for the sun to go down to relieve me from the burden of labor. My mother said I was "always the busiest young 'un" she ever saw, by which she meant that I was restless from the beginning — born so.

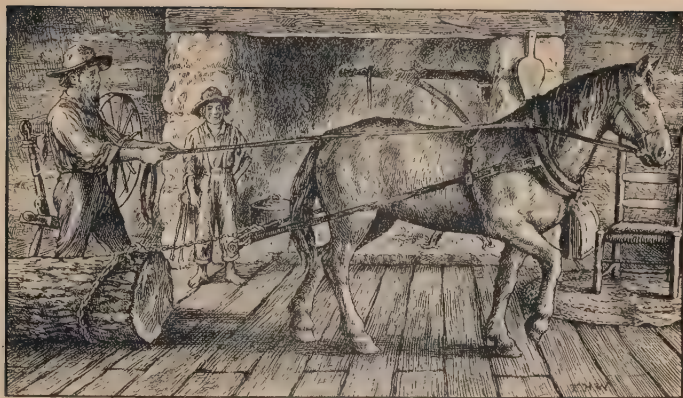
According to the best information obtainable, I was born in a log cabin, made, I think, of hickory logs. The walls of the cabin were only a little higher than a tall man's head. The floor was an oak puncheon one — that is, it was made of split logs with the flat surfaces facing up — and was quite smooth. I remember the logs of which the cabin was built were as straight as a plumb line. I remember later the tall straight timber in the near vicinity. The whole face of the country except the clearings was covered with a woods — ash, oak, hickory, walnut, wild cherry, maple, butternut.

The fireplace was nearly as wide as the cabin. I do not remember how the chimney was built, but I know it was so large that spatters of rain would reach the hot ashes in the fireplace. A wide dirt hearth in front of the fireplace gave room for the

Dutch oven in which the johnnycake was baked, the potatoes and corn were sometimes roasted, and the venison, which was then obtainable in the wilds of Ohio, was fried. The two doors on opposite sides of the room permitted the horse, dragging the huge backlog, to enter at one end of the cabin and go out at the other. The solid floor of split logs defied injury from such treatment.

A curtain at the back of the cabin marked the confines of a bedchamber for the "old folks." The older children climbed the ladder nailed to the wall to get to the loft floored with loose clapboards that rattled when trodden upon. The straw beds were so near the roof that the patter of the rain made music to the ear, and the spray of the falling water would often baptize the "towheads" left uncovered.

Our diet was simple, and the mush pot was a great factor in our home life. A large, heavy iron pot was hung on the crane in the chimney corner, where the mush would slowly bubble and sputter over or near a bed of oak coals for half the afternoon. And such mush! — always made from yellow corn meal and cooked three hours or more. This, eaten with plenty of fresh, rich milk, furnished the supper for the children. Tea? Not to be thought of. Sugar? It was too expensive — cost fifteen to eighteen cents a pound, and at a time when it took a week's labor to earn less money than a day's labor would earn now. Everything father had to sell was low-priced, while everything mother must buy at the store was high. Cheap molasses we had sometimes, but not often, meat only once a day, but eggs in abundance.



Bringing in the backlog.

For meat we used wild game, which was yet quite plentiful, especially rabbits, quail, ducks, and venison. There were still a good many wild turkeys, but not so many as Grandfather Baker would tell about. He could remember when the turkeys were so numerous that they would sometimes break the limbs of trees on which they were roosting. One story, printed in book form, about the wild turkeys of Ohio in real pioneer days in the beginning of the century almost equals the stories of the hordes of buffalo on the plains of the West along the Oregon Trail. (I can tell some buffalo stories myself from actual observation in 1852.) According to the published account, the wild turkeys in Ohio one day came out boldly to follow a farmer sowing grain until he had to put down his seed sack to drive the turkeys away with a club. They rambled, it is said, in flocks of a hundred or more — in one case of what was estimated as five hundred. One hunter killed seven

in one shot! Turkeys weighing twenty to twenty-five pounds were common, and one specimen reported even tipped the scales at twenty-six pounds. This encourages me to tell a bigger story — a true fish story — but I can't take time to do it now. You know at my time of life — nearly ninety-eight — I can tell as big a story as I have a mind to, as there are none left to contradict me; but honor bright, I will not exaggerate in this book.

Getting back to babyhood days — I was three years old before any incident that I can remember occurred, and this one was of no importance. When Saturday night arrived, the big washtub was always brought in. We children knew what that meant. It meant a thorough scrubbing and the use of soft soap. The incident referred to was when I got some of the soft-soap suds in my eyes and jumped out of the tub in spite of my mother, who gave chase to catch me; and mother was a corpulent woman, turning the scales at over two hundred. I scampered around the cabin crying at the top of my voice, she laughing immoderately.

I was not afraid of her — God bless her memory; she never struck me in her life, despite the fact that corporal punishment was common in the homes and therefore in the schools in pioneer days. The school-master usually had his supply of seasoned hazel switches to sting the backs of his victims and always a ferule to blister the palms of the hands of the larger pupils. Almost unbelievable, I would say. Yes; but I have seen and experienced just such treatment.

It is another childhood memory that a brutal teacher undertook to spank me, a child of five, because I did not speak a word plainly. This is the first fight of which I have any recollection. I could hardly remember that but for witnesses, one of them my oldest brother, who saw the struggle. My teeth, he said, did excellent work. The teacher, I regret to say, had been drinking.

What a spectacle — a half-drunken teacher maltreating his pupils! But then that was the time before a free school system. It was the time when liquor flowed too freely. It was commonly to be found not only in the homes, but in the fields. To harvest without whisky was not to be thought of; nobody ever heard of a log-rolling or a barn-raising without it. Be it said to the everlasting honor of my father, however, that he set himself firmly against the practice. He said his grain should rot in the field before he would supply whisky to his harvest hands.

As for myself, I have only one recollection of ever tasting alcoholic liquor in my boyhood. That was when I was eight years old. Some stupid fellow had found two other boys and me playing in the basement of a mill and gave us some whisky to drink. We didn't know what it was, but we began to feel funny and then ugly. Then we fell to fighting near a great big pile of bran and fell down on the bran and got our eyes and ears full of it. Father found me in this fix, took me up to the top story of the mill and gave me a good trouncing, as he called it — a beating, as I thought of it — and sent me home. I don't remember that he ever struck me before, and I am

sure he never did afterward. My, but didn't my blood boil with indignation! I hadn't intended doing anything wrong. I didn't know any better — and then to be beaten for it! Well, it sobered me, and I ran home to my mother as fast as my legs could carry me. The tender stroke of my mother's hands were balm to my torn heart; the tears that dropped from her eyes on my hands made such a lasting impression upon my mind that I never forgot it. That unpleasant experience did much to make me abstain from strong drink ever afterward.

I did, however, learn to smoke when very young. It came about in this way. My mother always smoked, as far back as I can remember. Women smoked in those days, as well as men, and nothing was thought of it. Well, that was before the time of cheap matches, and mother, whose corpulence made it hard for her to move around easily, would send me to put a coal in her pipe. I would take a whiff or two, just to get it started, you know, and this soon developed into the habit of lingering to keep it going. But let me be just to myself. More than forty years ago I threw away my pipe and have never smoked since, and never will smoke again.

My next recollection of school days was after father had moved to Lockland, Ohio, then ten miles north of Cincinnati. It is now, I presume, a suburb of that city. I played hooky instead of going to school; but one day, while I was under the canal bridge, the noise of passing teams so frightened me that I ran home and betrayed myself.



On the corduroy road.

Because my mind did not run to school work and because my disposition was restless, my mother allowed me to work at odd jobs for pay instead of compelling me to attend school. This cut down my actual school days to less than six months. It was, to say the least, a dangerous experiment, and one to be undertaken only by a mother who knew her child better than any other person could. I do not by any means advise other mothers to adopt such a course.

In those days apprenticeship was quite common. It was not thought to be a disgrace for a boy to be "bound out" until he was twenty-one, especially if he was to be learning a trade. Father took a notion he would bind me out to a Mr. Arthens, the mill owner at Lockland, who was childless, and one day he took me with him to talk it over. When asked,

finally, how I should like the change, I promptly replied that it would be all right if Mrs. Arthens would "do up my sore toes," whereupon there was such an outburst of merriment that I never forgot it. We must remember that boys in those days did not wear shoes in summer, and quite often not in winter either. But mother put an end to the whole matter by saying that the family must not be divided, and it was not.

Our pioneer home was full of love and helpfulness. My mother expected each child to work as well as to play. We were trained to take our part at home. The labor was light, to be sure, but it was service, and it brought happiness into our lives. For, after all, that home is happiest where everyone helps.

Our move to Indiana was a very important event in my boyhood days. This move was made during the autumn of 1839, when I was nine years old. I vividly remember the trip, for I walked every step of the way from Lockland, Ohio, to Attica, Indiana, about two hundred miles.

There was no room in the heavily laden wagon for me or for my brother Oliver, aged eleven. It was piled so high with household goods that little space was left even for mother and the two babies, one yet in arms. But we lads did not mind riding on "Shank's ponies."

The horses walked so briskly that we had to stick to business to keep up with them. We did find time, though, to throw a few stones at the frisky squirrels, or to kill a garter snake, or to gather some flowers for mother and the little ones, or to watch

the red-headed woodpeckers hammering at the trees. The journey was full of interest for two lively boys.

We built castles in the air at times as we trudged along. We made plans for raising chickens or for getting and keeping honey bees such as we saw at times on the road; at other times we would plan to raise horses, and then lambs if we happened to see a flock of sheep as we passed by. Anything and everything appealed to our imagination and made us happy and contented with our surroundings and the world at large.

Our appearance was what might well be called primitive, for we went barefooted and wore tow pants and checkered linsey-woolsey shirts, with a strip of cloth for "galluses," as suspenders were at that time called. Little did we think or care about appearance, bent as we were on having a good time — and that we surely had.

One dreary stretch of swamp that kept us on the corduroy road behind the jolting wagon I remember well; this was near Crawfordsville, Indiana. It is now gone, the corduroy and the timber as well. In their places great barns and comfortable houses dot the landscape as far as the eye can reach.

One habit that we boys acquired on that trip stuck to us all our lives, until the brother was lost at sea. When we followed behind the wagon, as we did part of the time, each took the name of the horse on his side of the road. I was "Tip," on the off side — that is, the right side; while brother was "Top," on the near, or left, side. Tip and Top, a span of big, fat, gray horses that would run away "at the

drop of the hat," were something to be proud of. This habit of Oliver's walking on the near side and my walking on the off continued for years and through many a mile of travel.

We soon, as boys, entered into partnership in our new home in Indiana, raising a garden, chickens, ducks, anything to be busy, all of which our parents enjoyed. We continued our partnership till manhood — in fact, until my brother's death parted us. We were much together in after life in Indiana, on the Plains, and in Washington, where we finally settled.



Plowing through the oak grubs on the Wabash.

CHAPTER TWO

BOYHOOD DAYS IN OLD INDIANA

WHEN we reached Indiana, we settled down on a rented farm. Times were hard with us, and for a season all the members of the household were called upon to contribute their mite. I drove four yoke of oxen for twenty-five cents a day, and during part of the time boarded at home at that. This was on the Wabash, where oak grubs grew, my father often said, "as thick as hair on a dog's back"; but they were really not so thick as that.

We used to force the big plowshare through and cut grubs as big as my wrist. When we saw a patch of them ahead, I would halloo and shout at the poor oxen and lay on the whip; but father wouldn't let me swear at them. Let me say here that I later discontinued this foolish fashion of driving and learned to talk to my oxen in a conversational tone and use the whip sparingly.

That reminds me of an experience I had later, in the summer when I was nineteen. In 1842 we had moved to Indianapolis from Attica, and Uncle John Kinworthy — a good soul he was, and an ardent Quaker — lived in Bridgeport, not far from us. One day I went to his house with three yoke of oxen to haul into place a heavy beam for a cider-press. The oxen had to be driven through the front dooryard in full sight and hearing of Uncle John's wife and three buxom Quaker girls, who either stood in the door or poked their heads out of the window.

The cattle would not go through the front yard past those girls. They kept doubling back, first on one side and then on the other. Uncle Johnny, noticing that I did not swear at the cattle, and attributing the absence of oaths to the presence of ladies, and maybe thinking, like a good many others, that oxen could not be driven without swearing at them, sought an opportunity, when the mistress of the house could not hear him, to say to me, "If thee can do any better, thee had better let out the word."

I was encouraged by my mother to seek odd jobs and keep the money myself, she, however, becoming my banker. In three years I had actually accumulated thirty-seven dollars. My! but what a treasure that was to me, and what a bond of confidence between my mother and me, for no one else, as I thought, knew about my treasure. I found out afterward, though, that father knew about it all the time.

My ambition was to get some land. I had heard there was a forty-acre tract in Hendricks County,

Indiana, yet to be entered at a dollar and a quarter an acre. As soon as I could get fifty dollars together I meant to hunt up that land and secure it. I used to dream about it days as well as nights. I sawed and cut wood for twenty-five cents a cord, and enjoyed the experience, for it added to my treasure.

My father, though a miller by trade, early taught me some valuable lessons about farming that I never forgot. We — I say “we” advisedly, as father continued to work in the mill and left me in charge of the farm — soon brought the run-down farm to the point where it produced twenty-three bushels of wheat to the acre instead of ten, by the rotation of corn and clover and then wheat. But there was no money in farming at the prices then prevailing, and the land for which father paid ten dollars an acre would not yield a rental equal to the interest on the money. The same land has recently sold for six hundred dollars an acre.

For a time I worked in the *Journal* printing office for S. V. B. Noel, who published a Free Soil paper. A part of my duty was to deliver the papers to subscribers. They treated me civilly, but when I was caught in the streets of Indianapolis with the Free Soil papers in my hand I was sure of abuse from someone, and a number of times narrowly escaped personal violence from the pro-slavery people.

In the office I was known as the “dévîl,” a term that annoyed me not a little. I worked with Wood, the pressman, as a roller boy, and in the same room was a power press, the power being a stalwart negro

who turned a crank. Wood and I used to race with the power press, and then I would fly the sheets — that is, take them off, when printed, with one hand and roll the type with the other. This so pleased Noel that he advanced my wages to a dollar and a half a week.

One of the subscribers to whom I delivered that anti-slavery paper was Henry Ward Beecher, then pastor of the Congregational Church that faced the Governor's Circle. At that time he had not attained the fame that came to him later in life. I became attached to him because of his kind manner and the gentle words he always found time to give me.

One episode of my life at this time I remember because I thought my parents were in the wrong. Vocal music was taught in singing school, which was conducted almost as regularly as were the day schools. I was passionately fond of music. Before the change of my voice came I had a fine alto voice and was a leader in my part of the class. This fact coming to the notice of the trustees of Beecher's church, an effort was made to have me join the choir. Mother first objected, because my clothes were not good enough. Then an offer was made to clothe me suitably and pay me something besides. And now father objected, because he did not want me to listen to preaching of a sect other than that to which he belonged. The incident set me to thinking, and finally drove me, young as I was, into a more liberal faith, though I dared not openly espouse it.

Another incident that occurred while I was working in the printing office I have remembered vividly

all these years. During the campaign of 1844, the Whigs held a gathering on the Tippecanoe battle ground. This gathering could hardly be called a convention; a better name for it would be a political camp meeting. The people came in wagons, on horseback, afoot — any way to get there — and camped, just as people used to do at religious camp meetings.

The journeymen printers of the *Journal* office planned to go in a covered wagon, and they offered to make a place for the "devil" if his parents would let him go along. This was speedily arranged with mother, who always took charge of such matters. When the proposition came to Noel's ears, he asked the men to print me some campaign songs. This they did with a will, Wood running them off the press after the day's work while I rolled the type for him. My, wasn't I the proudest boy that ever walked the earth! Visions of a pocketful of money haunted me almost day and night until we arrived on the battlefield. But lo and behold, nobody would pay any attention to me! Bands were playing here and there; glee clubs would sing and march, first on one side of the ground and then on the



Carrying papers to Henry Ward Beecher.

other ; processions were parading and crowds surging, making it necessary to look out lest one be run over. Although the rain would pour down in torrents, the marching and countermarching went on all the same and continued for a week.

An elderly journeyman printer named May, who in a way stood sponsor for our party, told me that if I would get up on the fence and sing the songs, the people would buy them. Sure enough, when I stood up and sang the crowds came, and I sold every copy I had. I went home with eleven dollars in my pocket, the richest boy on earth.

In the year 1845 a letter came from Grandfather Baker in Ohio to my mother, saying that he would give her a thousand dollars with which to buy a farm. The burning question with my father and mother was how to get the money out from Ohio to Indiana. They actually went in a covered wagon to Ohio for it and hauled it home, all silver, in a box. This silver was nearly all foreign coin. Prior to that time but a few million dollars had been coined by the United States government.

My Grandfather Baker was a farmer and lived twenty-five miles away from Cincinnati as the road ran. In 1801 or 1802 he had settled a few miles east of Hamilton, Ohio, where my mother was born and near where I was born. In ten years' time he had his flock of sheep, his cows, pigs, horses, colts, and abundance of pasture on the land he had cleared.

I never could understand why in all these years he didn't have a wagon, but such was the case. He never would go in debt for anything. So when my

mother was twelve years old, she began making trips on horseback with her father to the market at Cincinnati. They carried everything they had to sell on the horses they rode, or perhaps a loose horse or a two-year-old colt might be taken along. They carried butter, eggs, chickens — sometimes dressed and sometimes alive — and meat, sometimes smoked and sometimes

fresh. Sometimes they would make lye or hominy, and sometimes sauerkraut; then again when hog-killing time came around, sausage and head cheese would be added to the stock they offered on the market.

Nor was this all. The family of four children were all girls. They were taught to card the wool raised on the farm, spin the yarn, and weave the cloth all by hand in the cabin adjoining the living room and sometimes in the living room. I can remember the hum of the spinning-wheel and the "slam" of the loom as the filling of cloth was sent "home," also the rattle of grandmother's knitting-needles to be heard often clear across the room, which is a precious memory. So to the stock of products for market would often be added a "bolt" of cloth, or perhaps a blanket or two or a few pairs of stockings and often



Singing at a political camp meeting.

a large bundle of yarn which always found a ready purchaser — wanted by the ladies of the city for their knitting parties.

The trip to Cincinnati would often be made by moonlight, so timed as to arrive at “peep of day” to be ready for the buyers that were sure to come to meet the country folk, for this was a real country market where no middlemen appeared. My grandfather’s “stuff,” as they called it, would be displayed either on the sidewalk or in the street near by, where his horses were munching their grain or a bit of hay; and before noon they would be off on their road home, to arrive by nightfall, hungry and tired, with the money safe in his deerskin sack.

It is needless to add that this household was thrifty and accumulated money. Later in life it was currently reported that my grandfather had a barrel of money — silver, of course — and I can readily believe the story, as he spent but little and was always accumulating.

Out of this store came the thousand dollars that he gave mother. It was more than a peck and took nearly a whole day to count. At least one of nearly every coin from every nation on earth seemed to be there, and the “tables” had to be consulted in computing the value.

I was fifteen years old and working on the *Journal* at the time when the farm was bought, but it seemed that I was not cut out for a printer. My inclinations ran more to open-air life, so father placed me on the farm as soon as the purchase was made and left me in full charge of the work there, while he gave his

time to milling. Be it said that I early turned my attention to the girls as well as to the farm and married young, before I reached the age of twenty-one. This truly was a fortunate venture, for my wife and I lived happily together for fifty-eight years.





The departure from home.

CHAPTER THREE

LEAVING THE HOME NEST FOR IOWA

IN the early '50's there lived near Indianapolis two young people. Their fathers were old-time farmers, keeping no "hired men" and buying very little "store goods." The girl could spin and weave, make delicious butter, knit soft, well-shaped socks, and cook as good a meal as any other country girl around. She was, withal, as buxom a lass as ever grew in Indiana. The young man was a little uncouth in appearance, round-faced, rather stout in build — almost fat. He loved to hunt possums and coons in the woods round about. He was a little boisterous, always restless, and not especially polished in manners. Yet he had at least one redeeming trait of character: he loved to work and was known to be as industrious a lad as any in the neighborhood.

These two young people grew up to the age of manhood and womanhood knowing but little of the world outside their home sphere. Who can say that they were not as happy as if they had seen the whole world? Had they not experienced the joys of the sugar camp while "stirring off" the lively, creeping maple sugar? Both had been thumped upon the bare head by the falling hickory nuts in windy weather; had hunted the black walnuts half hidden in the leaves; had scraped the ground for the elusive beechnuts. They had ventured to apple parings together when not yet out of their teens.

"I'm going to be a farmer when I get married," the lad quite abruptly said to the lass one day, without any previous conversation to lead up to the statement.

His companion showed by her confusion that she had not mistaken what was in his mind. After a while she remarked, "Yes, I want to be a farmer, too. But I want to be a farmer on our own land."

Two bargains were confirmed then and there when the lad said, "We will go West and not live on pap's farm," and she responded, "Nor in the old cabin, nor any cabin unless it's our own."

So the resolution was made that they would go to Iowa, get some land, and grow up with the country.

About the first week of October, in 1851, a covered wagon drew up in front of Thomas Sumner's house, then but four miles out from Indianapolis on the National Road. It was ready to be loaded for the journey to Iowa.

Eliza Jane, Thomas Sumner's second daughter, the lass already described, was now the wife of the young man mentioned — the author. She also was ready for the journey. She had prepared supplies enough to last all the way — cake and butter and pumpkin pies, jellies and the like, with plenty of substantials besides. The two young people had plenty of blankets, a good-sized Dutch oven, an extra pair of shoes apiece, cloth for two dresses for the wife, and an extra pair of trousers for the husband.

Tears could not be restrained as the loading progressed and the realization faced the parents of both that the young people were about to leave them.

"Why, mother, we are only going to Iowa, you know, where we can get a home that shall be our own. It's not so far away — only about five hundred miles."

"Yes, I know, but suppose you get sick in that uninhabited country; who will take care of you?"

Notwithstanding this motherly solicitude, the young people could not fail to know that there was a secret feeling of approval in the good woman's breast. Our parents drove along beside us for a few miles and then the reluctant final parting came. We could not then know that one of these loved parents would lay down her life a few years later in a heroic attempt to follow the wanderers to Oregon. She rests in an unknown and unmarked grave in the Platte valley.

What shall I say of that October drive from the home near Indianapolis to Eddyville, Iowa, in the delightful atmosphere of Indian summer? It was an atmosphere of hope and content. We had the wide

world before us; we had good health; and above all we had each other.

At this time but one railroad entered Indianapolis — it would be called a tramway now — from Madison on the Ohio River. When we cut loose from that embryo city we left railroads behind us, except where rails were laid crosswise in the wagon track to keep the wagon out of the mud. No matter if the road was rough — we could go a little slower, and shouldn't we have a better appetite for supper because of the jolting, and sleep the sounder? Everything in the world looked bright.

The great Mississippi was crossed at Burlington. After a few days of further driving, we arrived at Eddyville, in Iowa. Though we did not realize it at the time, this was destined to be only a place to winter, a way station on our route to Oregon.

My first introduction to an Iowa winter was in a surveyor's camp on the western borders of the state. This was a little north of Kaneshville, now Council Bluffs. I began as cook for the camp, but very soon changed this position for that of flagman.

If there are any settlers now left of the Iowa of that day, they will remember that the winter was bitter cold. On the way back to Eddyville from the surveying trip, just before Christmas, I encountered one of the bitterest of those bitter days.

A companion named Vance rested with me overnight in a cabin. We had scant food for ourselves or for the mare we led. It was thirty-five miles to the next cabin; we must reach that place or lie out in the snow. So a very early start was made before

daybreak, while the wind lay. The good woman of the cabin baked us some biscuits for a noon lunch, but they were frozen solid in our pockets before we had been out two hours. The wind rose with the sun, and with the sun two bright sun dogs — a beautiful sight to behold, but arising from conditions intolerable to bear. Vance came near freezing to death, and would have done so had I not succeeded in arousing him to anger and getting him off the mare.

I vowed then that I would leave Iowa, and the Oregon fever that had already seized me was heightened.

Dr. Marcus Whitman had returned overland during the winter of 1842-1843. Frémont had made his first trip as far as to the Rocky Mountains and returned, to be commissioned to lead a large exploring party to the Oregon country. The times were not prosperous nor prospects good in the Middle West, and besides, an unrest had taken possession of the minds of many people on account of the slavery question. The result was that late in 1842 more than a thousand people congregated near Independence,¹ not far from what is now Kansas City, preparing to start for Oregon as soon as seasonable weather would permit. Some pushed out to Elm Grove, west of the Missouri, and camped; others passed on a little farther. Finally a great company was formed, captains were appointed, and the start was made. All was to move with precision and order. But the independent spirit of the frontiersmen would not brook control and soon there came a division into two

At the river landing, which is about ten miles north of the town.

parties, then, later, others broke away, until finally but little of the discipline was left, though there continued coöperation in the face of a common danger.

During the year 1844, nearly fifteen hundred immigrants reached Oregon and yet, early in 1845, the British government refused to accept the thrice-made offer of a settlement of the boundary on the forty-ninth parallel; but when three thousand emigrants crossed over during the year 1845, and the Hudson's Bay Company gave up the contest by formally, on the fifteenth of August, 1845, placing itself under the protection of the provisional government, then the British government of its own accord offered to accept the line it had so long persistently refused. A treaty with England speedily followed, and the Oregon question was settled.

Of the subsequent migration I cannot tarry to speak in detail. In 1850 the population of the whole of the old Oregon country was less than fifteen thousand. The gold excitement had drawn large numbers to California and turned much of the immigration from the East to that field. Not until the great wave of 1852, when fifty thousand people crossed the Missouri River, did Oregon make a new beginning in the race for population.

Stories were coming to us of the wonderful climate, the rich soil, and the wealth of timber and woodland in the Oregon country, which then included the present states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and parts of Montana and Wyoming.

It was a special consideration that if we went to Oregon the government would give us each three hun-

dred and twenty acres of land. A measure known as the Linn Bill had passed the Senate, granting land to actual settlers in the Oregon country, whereas in Iowa we should have to purchase it. The price would be low, to be sure, but the land must be bought and paid for on the spot. No preëmption laws or beneficial homestead laws were in force then, nor did they come until many years later. It was little wonder that a young farmer with no money should want to join the westward-moving throng.

But what about going to Oregon when springtime came? An event was pending that rendered a positive decision impossible for the moment. It was not until the first week of April, 1852, when our first-born baby boy was a month old, that we could say we were going to Oregon that spring. It would be a long, hard journey for such a little fellow, but as it turned out, he stood it like a young hero.





Crossing Iowa, on the way to Oregon.

CHAPTER FOUR

TAKING THE TRAIL FOR OREGON

WHEN we drove out of Eddyville, headed for the Oregon country, on an early-spring day in 1852, our train consisted of but one wagon, two yoke of four-year old steers, and one yoke of cows. We also had one extra cow. This cow was the only animal we lost on the whole journey; she strayed away in the river bottom before we crossed the Missouri.

William Buck, who had joined us as partner for the expedition, was a man six years my senior. He had had some experience on the Plains, and he knew what outfit was needed; but he had little knowledge in regard to a team of cattle. He was an impulsive man, and to some extent excitable, yet withal a man of excellent judgment and as honest as God makes men. No lazy bones occupied a place in Buck's body. He was scrupulously neat and cleanly in all his ways, courteous to everyone, always in good

humor, and always looking upon the bright side of things. A better trail mate could not have been found.

Buck's skill in camp work and his lack of ability to handle the team naturally settled the division of the work between us. It was he who selected the outfit to go into the wagon, while I fitted up the wagon and bought the team. We had butter packed in the center of the flour, which was in double sacks; eggs packed in corn meal or flour; fruit in abundance, and dried pumpkins; a little jerked beef, not too salt. Last though not least, there was a demijohn of brandy "for medicinal purposes only," as Buck said, with a merry twinkle of the eye.

The little wife had prepared the homemade yeast cake which she knew so well how to make and dry, and we had light bread to eat all the way across. We baked the bread in a tin reflector instead of the heavy Dutch oven so much in use on the Plains.

The butter in part melted and mingled with the flour, yet it did not matter much, as the "shortcake" that resulted made us almost glad the mishap had occurred. Besides, did we not have plenty of fresh butter, from the milk of our own cows, churned every day in the can by the jostling of the wagon? Then the buttermilk! What a luxury! I shall never, as long as I live, forget the shortcake and corn bread, the puddings and pumpkin pies, and above all, the buttermilk.

I am willing to claim credit to myself for the team, every hoof of which reached the Coast in safety. Four steers and two cows were sufficient for our light

wagon and the light outfit, not a pound of which but was useful (except the brandy) and necessary for our comfort. I had chosen steers that had never been under the yoke, though plenty of broken-in oxen could have been had, generally of that class that had been broken in spirit as well as to the yoke.

The first day's drive out from Eddyville was a short one. When we got to plodding along over the Plains, we made from fifteen to twenty miles a day. That was counted a good day's drive, without unusual accidents or delays.

As I now remember, this was the only day on the entire trip when the cattle were allowed to stand in the yoke at noontime, while the owners lunched and rested. When it was near nightfall we made our first camp. Buck excitedly insisted that we must not unyoke the cattle.

"What shall we do?" I asked. "They can't live in the yoke always."

"Yes, but if you unyoke here you will never catch them again," he said.

One word brought on another until we were almost in a dispute, when a stranger, Thomas McAuley, who was camped near by, stepped in. He said his own cattle were gentle; there were three men of his party, and they would help us yoke up in the morning. I gratefully accepted his offer and unyoked, and we had no trouble in starting off the next morning. After that, never a word with a semblance of contention to it passed between Buck and me.

Scanning McAuley's outfit in the morning, I was quite troubled to start out with him. His teams,

principally cows, were light, and they were thin in flesh; his wagons were apparently light and as frail as the teams. But I soon found that his outfit, like ours, carried no extra weight, and he knew how to care for a team. He was, besides, an obliging neighbor, which was fully demonstrated on many trying occasions, as we traveled in company for more than a thousand miles, until his road to California parted from ours at the big bend of the Bear River.

Of the trip through Iowa little remains to be said further than that the grass was thin and washy, the roads muddy and slippery, and the weather execrable, although May had been ushered in long before we reached the Missouri River. Here my brother Oliver joined us, having come from Indianapolis with old-time comrades and friends. With the McAuleys and Oliver's party, we mustered a train of five wagons.

We had now come to the beginning of the second stage of our long journey. We had reached the Missouri River, at the little Mormon town of Kanessville (now Council Bluffs), a few miles from the place where we were to cross the river.¹ From the point where we would land on the western bank of the river, a few miles below where Omaha now stands, we should strike out across the Plains, through what is now Nebraska and Wyoming, to the crest of the continent. We should follow the ox-team trail along the north bank of the Platte, and then up the north fork of the Platte to the mountains.

¹ The map on page 38 will be of interest in connection with the story of the journey from this point on.



The Missouri River crossing near Kanesville. This picture and many of those to follow in this book were painted by Mr. W. H. Jackson, who traveled over the Oregon Trail with a covered wagon a few years after Mr. Meeker made the trip about which he has written.

But first we must get across the Missouri.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed one of the women, as we approached the landing for the ferry.

"It looks for all the world like a big white flat-iron," answered another.

We drivers had little time for looking and for making comparisons. All our attention had to be given to our teams, for as we neared the landing we found the roads terribly cut up on account of the concentrated travel.

We had now caught up with the great mass of westward-moving migration. At Kanesville the last purchases were made and the last letter sent to anxious friends, for the emigrants would not find

another town until they had crossed the Rocky Mountains. Consequently the congestion here became so great that the teams were literally blocked and stood in line for hours before they could get out of the jam.

It was indeed a sight long to be remembered. The "white flatiron" proved to be wagons with their tongues pointing to the landing. A center train and several parallel trains extended back in the rear, gradually covering a wider range the farther back from the river they went. Several hundred wagons were thus closely interlocked, completely blocking the approach to the landing.

All about were camps of every kind, some without any covering at all, others with comfortable tents. Nearly everybody appeared to be intent on merry-making, and the fiddlers and dancers were busy; but here and there were small groups engaged in devotional services. These camps contained the outfits, in great part, of the wagons in line; some of them had been there for two weeks with still no prospect of securing an early crossing. Two scows only were engaged in crossing the wagons and teams.

The muddy waters of the Missouri had already swallowed up two victims. On the first day we were there, I saw a third victim go under the drift of a small island within sight of his shrieking wife. The stock had rushed to one side of the boat, submerging the gunwale, and had precipitated the whole load into the dangerous river. One yoke of oxen that had reached the farther shore deliberately reëntered the river with a heavy yoke on, and swam back to the

Iowa side; there they were finally saved by the helping hands of the assembled emigrants.

"What shall we do?" was the question passed around in our party, without answer. Tom McAuley was not yet looked upon as a leader, as was the case later.

"Build a boat," said his sister Margaret, a most determined maiden lady, the oldest of the party and as resolute and brave as the bravest.

But of what should we build it? While a search for material was being made, one of our party, who had got across the river in search of timber, discovered a scow, almost completely buried, on the sandpit opposite the landing. The report seemed too good to be true.

The next thing to do was to find the owner. We discovered him eleven miles down the river.

"Yes, if you will agree to deliver the boat safely to me after crossing your five wagons and teams, you may have it," said he.

The bargain was closed then and there. My, but that night didn't we make the sand fly from the boat! By morning we could begin to see the end of the job. Then, while busy hands began to cut a landing on the perpendicular sandy bank of the Iowa side, others were preparing sweeps, as the long oars were called. All was bustle and stir.

Meanwhile it had become noised around that another boat would be put on to ferry people over, and we were besieged with applications from detained emigrants. Finally, the word coming to the ears of the ferrymen, they were foolish enough to under-

take to prevent us from crossing without their help. A writ of replevin or some other process was issued — I never knew exactly what — directing the sheriff to take possession of the boat when it landed. This he attempted to do.

I never before or since attempted to resist an officer of the law; but when that sheriff put in an appearance and we realized what his coming meant, there wasn't a man in our party that did not run to the near-by camp for his gun. It is needless to add that we did not need to use the guns. As if by magic a hundred other guns came in sight. The sheriff withdrew, and the crossing went on peaceably till all our wagons were safely landed.

We had still another danger to face. We learned that an attempt would be made to take the boat from us, the action being not against us, but against the owner. Thanks to the adroit management of McAuley and my brother Oliver, we were able to fulfill our engagement to deliver the boat safely to the owner.

We were now across the river, and it might almost be said that we had left the United States. When we set foot upon the west bank of the Missouri River we were outside the pale of law. We were within the Indian country, where no organized civil government existed.

Some people, and even some writers, have assumed that on the Plains each man was "a law unto himself" and free to do his own will — dependent, of course, upon his physical ability to enforce it. Nothing could be farther from the facts than this

assumption, as evil-doers soon found out to their great discomfort.

It is true that no general organization for law and order was effected on the western side of the river; but the American instinct for fair play and a hearing for everybody prevailed, so that while there was no mob law, the law of self-preservation asserted itself, and the counsels of the level-headed older men prevailed.

We are told that this same condition existed in the emigration of 1843; but there was this difference between the two emigrations: in the 1843 emigration to Oregon all, by agreement, belonged to one or the other of the two companies, to the "cow column" or to the "light brigade," while with the emigrants of 1852 it is safe to say that more than half did not belong to large companies or, one might say, to any organized company. But this made no difference, for when an occasion called for action a "high court" was convened, and woe betide the man who would undertake to defy its mandates after its deliberations were made public.

An incident that occurred in what is now Wyoming, well up on the Sweetwater River, will illustrate the spirit of determination of the sturdy men of the Plains. A murder had been committed, and it was clear that the motive was robbery. The suspected man and his family were traveling along with the moving column. Men who had volunteered to search for the guilty man finally found evidence proving the guilt of the person suspected. A council of twelve men was called, and it deliberated until

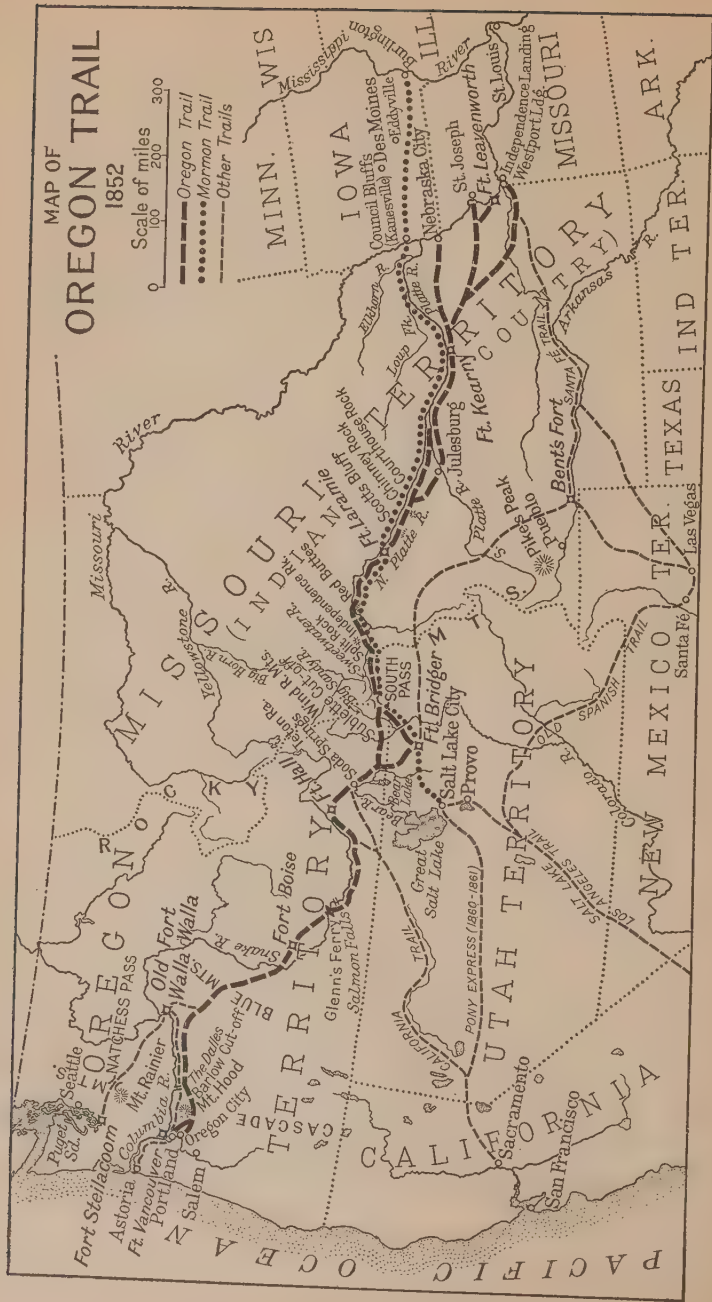
MAP OF

OREGON TRAIL

1852

Scale of miles
0 100 200 300

- Oregon Trail
- Mormon Trail
- - - Other Trails



the second day, meanwhile holding the murderer safely.

What were they to do? Here were a wife and four little children depending upon this man for their lives. What would become of his family if justice was meted out to him? Soon there developed an undercurrent of opinion that it was probably better to waive punishment than to endanger the lives of the family; but the council would not be swerved from its resolution. At sundown of the third day the criminal was hanged in the presence of the whole camp. This was not done until ample provision had been made to insure the safety of the family by providing a driver to finish the journey. I came so near to seeing the hanging that I did see the ends of the wagon tongues in the air and the rope dangling therefrom.

From necessity, murder was punishable with death. The penalty for stealing was whipping, which, when inflicted by one of those long ox lashes in the hands of an expert, would bring the blood from the victim's back at every stroke. Minor offenses, or differences generally, were arbitrated. Each party would abide by the decision as if it had come from a court of law. Lawlessness was not common on the Plains. It was less common, indeed, than in the communities from which the great body of the emigrants had been drawn, for punishment was swift and certain.

A large part of the emigrants formed themselves into large companies and elected captains. These combinations soon began to dissolve and re-form, only to dissolve again, with a steady accompaniment

of contentions. I would not enter into any organized company, but neither could I travel alone. By tacit agreement our party and the McAuleys traveled together, the outfit consisting of four wagons and thirteen persons — nine men, three women, and the baby. We separated only when our roads parted — the one to go to California, the other to Oregon. Yet although we kept apart as a separate unit, we were all the while in one great train, never out of sight and hearing of others. In fact, at times the road would be so full of wagons that we were surrounded by people. Sometimes all could not travel in one track, and this fact accounts for the double road-beds seen in so many places on the trail.

We divided our work and responsibilities. One of our party always went ahead to look out for water, grass, and fuel, three requisites for a camping place. The grass along the beaten track was always eaten off close by the loose stock, of which there were great numbers, and so we had frequently to take the cattle long distances from camp.

Then came the most trying part of the whole trip — the all-night watch, which resulted in our making the cattle our bedfellows, back to back for warmth and for signal as well. If the ox got up, we were up with him. It was not long, though, till we were used to it, and slept quite a bit except when a storm struck us; well, then, to say the least, it was not a pleasure outing.

But weren't we glad when the morning came, with, perchance, the smoke of the camp fire in sight? And maybe, as we approached, we could catch the aroma

of the coffee; and then such tender greetings and such thoughtful care that would have touched a heart of stone. To us it seemed like a paradise. We were supremely happy !





Westport Landing on the Missouri River. Here, where Kansas City now stands, one of the important lines of Oregon Trail migration started overland. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WESTWARD RUSH

WE had crossed the Missouri on the seventeenth and eighteenth of May. The next day we made a short drive, and camped within hearing of the shrill steamboat whistle that resounded far over the prairie.

The whistle announced the arrival of a steamer. This meant that a dozen or more wagons could be carried across the river at a time, and that a dozen or more trips could be made during the day, with as many more at night. Very soon we were overtaken by this throng of wagons. They gave us some troubles, and much discomfort.

And now that we were fairly on the way, the whole atmosphere seemed changed. Instead of the discordant violin and more discordant voices, with the

fantastic night dances in the open air where the earth served as a floor, there soon prevailed a more sober mien, even among the young people, as they began to encounter the fatigue of a day's drive and the cares of a night watch.

The rush for the West was then at its height. The plan of action was to push ahead and make as big a day's drive as possible; hence it is not to be wondered at that nearly all the thousand wagons that crossed the river after we did soon passed us.

"Now, fellers, jist let 'em rush on. If we keep cool, we'll overcatch 'em afore long," said McAuley.

And we did. We passed many a team, broken down as a result of those first few days of rush. People often brought these and other ills upon themselves by their own indiscretion.

The traveling had not progressed far until there came a general outcry against the heavy loads and unnecessary articles. Soon we began to see abandoned property. First it might be a table or a cupboard, or perhaps a bedstead or a cast-iron cook-stove. Then feather beds, blankets, quilts, and pillows were seen. Very soon, here and there would be an abandoned wagon, then provisions — stacks of flour and bacon being the most abundant.

It was a case of help yourself if you would; no one would interfere. In some places a sign was posted — "Help yourself." Hundreds of wagons were left and hundreds of tons of goods. People seemed to vie with each other in giving away their property. There was no chance to sell, and they disliked to destroy their goods.

Long after the end of the mania for getting rid of goods to lighten loads, the abandonment of wagons continued, as the teams became weaker and the ravages of cholera among the emigrants began to tell. It was then that many lost their heads and ruined their teams by furious driving, by lack of care, and by abuse. There came a veritable stampede — a strife for possession of the road, to see who should get ahead. It was against the rule to attempt to pass a team ahead; a wagon that had withdrawn from the line and stopped beside the trail could get into the line again, but on the march it could not cut ahead of the wagon in front of it. Yet now whole trains would strive, often with bad blood, for the mastery of the trail, one attempting to pass the other. Frequently there were drivers on both sides of the team to urge the poor, suffering brutes forward.

The epidemic struck our moving column where the throng from the south side of the Platte began crossing. This, as I recollect, was near old Fort Kearny,¹ not far from where the city of Kearney now stands, about two hundred miles west of the Missouri.

“What shall we do?” passed from one to another in our little family council.

“Now, fellers,” said McAuley, “don’t lose your heads, but do jist as you’ve been doing. You gals, jist make your bread as light as ever, and we’ll take river water the same as ever, even if it is most as thick as mud, and boil it.”

¹ Fort Kearny was named officially after General Stephen Kearny, who established the post. It was laid out by an engineer, Colonel James Kearney, whose name is preserved in the spelling of the name of the city.

*L. Palenske*

The Platte River, west of the present site of Casper, Wyoming. Along this old stream the Oregon Trail wound its way for nearly five hundred miles.

We had all along refused to dig little wells near the banks of the Platte, as many others did ; for we had soon learned that the water obtained was strongly charged with alkali, while the river water was comparatively pure, except for the sediment, so fine as seemingly to be held in solution.

“Keep cool,” McAuley continued. “Maybe we’ll have to lay down, and maybe not. Anyway, it’s no use frettin’. What’s to be will be, ’specially if we but help things along.”

This advice fell upon willing ears, as most of us were already of the same mind. We did just as we had been doing, and all but one of us escaped unharmed.

As we gradually crept out on the Plains and saw the sickness due to improper food, or in some cases to its improper preparation, it was borne in upon me how blessed I was, with such a trail partner as Buck and such a life partner as my wife. Some trains were without fruit, and most of them depended upon saleratus for raising their bread. Many had only fat

bacon for meat until the buffalo supplied a change. No doubt much of the sickness attributed to the cholera was caused by bad diet.

We had then been in the buffalo country for several days. Some of the young men, keen for hunting, had made themselves sick by getting overheated and drinking impure water. Such was the experience of my brother Oliver. Being of an adventurous spirit, he could not restrain his ardor, gave chase to the buffaloes, and fell sick almost to death.

This occurred just at the time when we encountered the cholera panic. It must be the cholera that had taken hold of him, his companions argued. Some of his party could not delay.

"It is certain death," I said, "to take him along in that condition."

They admitted this to be true.

"Divide the outfit, then," it was suggested.

Two of Oliver's companions, the Davenport brothers, would not leave him; so their portion of the outfit was set aside with his. This gave the three a wagon and a team.

Turning to Buck, I said, "I can't ask you to stay with me."

The answer came back as quick as a flash, "I'm going to stay with you without being asked."

And he did, too, though my brother was almost a total stranger to him.

We nursed the sick man for four days amidst scenes of death and excitement such as I hope never again to see. Scenes of sickness and death were everywhere around us. The story of the trip across the

Plains is a story of trials that beset the people during a five months' struggle on a tented field of two thousand miles of marching. As on a battlefield, the dead lay sometimes in rows of fifties or more. The trail often became so lined with fallen animals one could scarcely be out of sight or smell of carrion. The sick had no respite from suffering, nor the well from fatigue. Most of the pioneers were panic-stricken. Crowds of people were continually hurrying past us in their desperate haste to escape the dreadful epidemic. On the fifth day we were able to proceed and to take the convalescent man with us.

The experience of our camp was the experience of hundreds of others; there were countless incidents of friends parting, of desertion, of noble sacrifice, of the revelation of the best and the worst in man.

In a diary of one of the pioneers of these days, I find the following: "Found a family consisting of husband, wife, and four small children, whose cattle we supposed had given out and died. They were here all alone, and no wagon or cattle in sight." They had been thrown out by the owner of a wagon and left on the road to die.

There did seem instances of total depravity, so brutal and selfish were the actions of some men — brutal to men and women alike, to dumb brutes, and in fact to themselves. And yet, it is a pleasure to record that there were countless instances of noble self-sacrifice, of helpfulness, of unselfishness, even to the point of imperiling life. It became a common saying that to know one's neighbor one must see him on the Plains.

From a near-by page of the same diary quoted above, I read: "Here we met Mr. Lot Whitcom, direct from Oregon. Told me a great deal about Oregon. He has provisions, but none to sell; but gives to all he finds in want, and who are unable to buy."





Camping near Chimney Rock. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PIONEER ARMY OF THE PLAINS

DURING the ox-team days a mighty army of pioneers went West. In the year that we crossed (1852), when the migration was at its height, this army made an unbroken column fully five hundred miles long. We knew by the inscribed dates found on Independence Rock and elsewhere that there were wagons three hundred miles ahead of us, and the throng continued crossing the Missouri for more than a month after we had crossed it.

How many people this army comprised cannot be known; the roll was never called. History has no record of a greater number of emigrants ever making so long a journey as did these pioneers. There must have been three hundred and fifty thousand in the years of the great rush overland, from 1843 to 1857. Careful estimates of the total migration westward

from 1843 to 1869, when the first railroad across the continent was completed, make the number nearly half a million.

The army of loose stock that accompanied this huge caravan — a column, we may also say, five hundred miles long without break — added greatly to the discomfort of all. Of course, the number of cattle and horses will never be known, but their number was legion compared with the number of those that labored under the yoke or in the harness. A conservative estimate would be not less than six animals to the wagon, and surely there were three loose animals to each one in the teams. By this it would appear that as we counted sixteen hundred wagons that passed while we waited those four days for Oliver to recover sufficiently to travel, nearly ten thousand beasts of burden and thirty thousand loose stock must have accompanied them. As to the number of persons, certainly there were five to the wagon, perhaps more; but if it was five, eight thousand people — men, women, and children — passed on during those four days, many to their graves not far off.

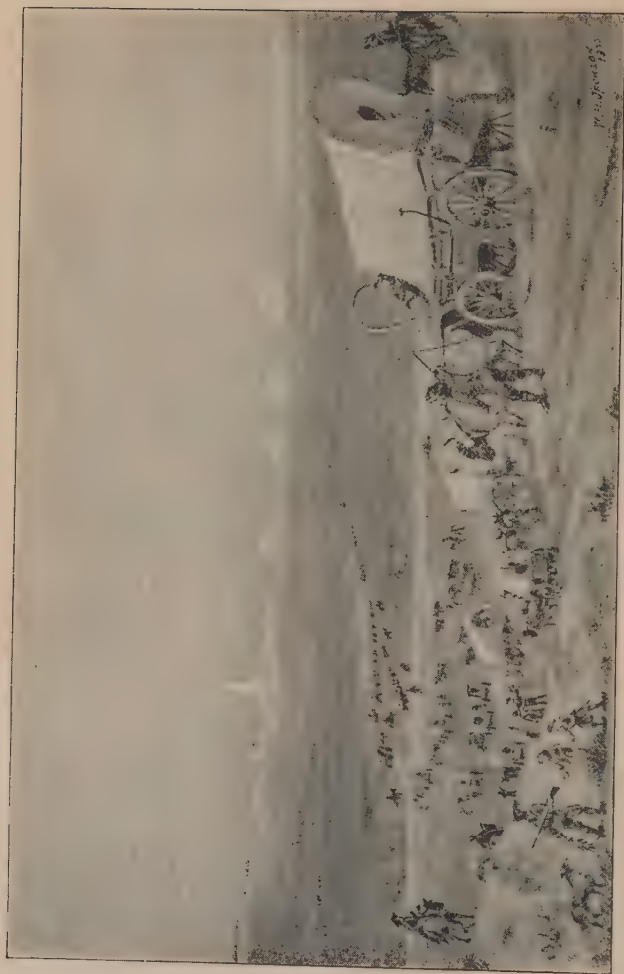
Is it any wonder that the old trail was worn so deep that even now in places it looks like a great canal? At one point near Splitrock, Wyoming, I found the road cut so deep in the solid sandstone that the kingbolt of my wagon dragged on the high center.

The pioneer army was a moving mass of human beings and dumb brutes, at times mixed in inextricable confusion, a hundred feet wide or more. Like



Deep ruts had been worn in the solid rock of the trail through the mountain country.

the shifting clouds of a summer day the trains seemed to dissolve and disappear, while no one apparently knew what had become of their component parts or whither they had gone. Sometimes two columns of wagons, traveling on parallel lines and near each other, would serve as a barrier to prevent loose stock



The Chimney Rock region of the North Platte River in Nebraska. Painting by
W. H. Jackson from a sketch made on the spot on July 31, 1866.

from crossing; but usually there would be a confused mass of cows, young cattle, horses, and men afoot moving along the outskirts.

Here and there would be the drivers of loose stock, some on foot and some on horseback — a young girl, maybe, riding astride and with a younger child behind her, going here and there after an intractable cow, while the mother could be seen in the confusion lending a helping hand. As in a thronged city street, no one seemed to look to the right or to the left, or to pay much attention, if any, to others, all being bent only on accomplishing the task in hand.

Of the fortitude of the women one cannot say too much. Embarrassed at the start by the follies of fashion, they soon rose to the occasion and cast false modesty aside. Long dresses were quickly discarded and the bloomer donned. Could we but have had the camera trained on one of those typical camps, what a picture there would be. Elderly matrons dressed almost like little girls of today. The younger women were rather shy of accepting the inevitable but finally fell into the procession, and we soon had a community of women wearing bloomers. Some of them went barefoot, partly from choice and in some cases from necessity.

The same could be said of the men, as shoe leather began to grind out from the sand and dry heat. Of all the fantastic costumes, it is safe to say the like was never seen before. The scene beggars description. Patches became visible upon the clothing of preachers as well as laymen; the situation brooked no respect of persons. The grandmother's cap was soon



The dust was intolerable.

displaced by a handkerchief or perhaps a bit of cloth. Grandfather's high crowned hat disappeared as if by magic. Hatless and bootless men became a common sight. Bonnetless women were to be seen on all sides. They wore what they had left or could get, without question as to the fitness of things. Rich dresses were worn by some ladies because they had no others; the gentlemen drew upon their wardrobes until scarcely a fine unsoiled suit was left.

The dust was intolerable. In calm weather it would rise so thick at times that the lead team of oxen could not be seen from the wagon. Like a London fog, it seemed thick enough to cut. Then again, the steady flow of wind through the South Pass would hurl the dust and sand like fine hail, sometimes with force enough to sting the face and hands.

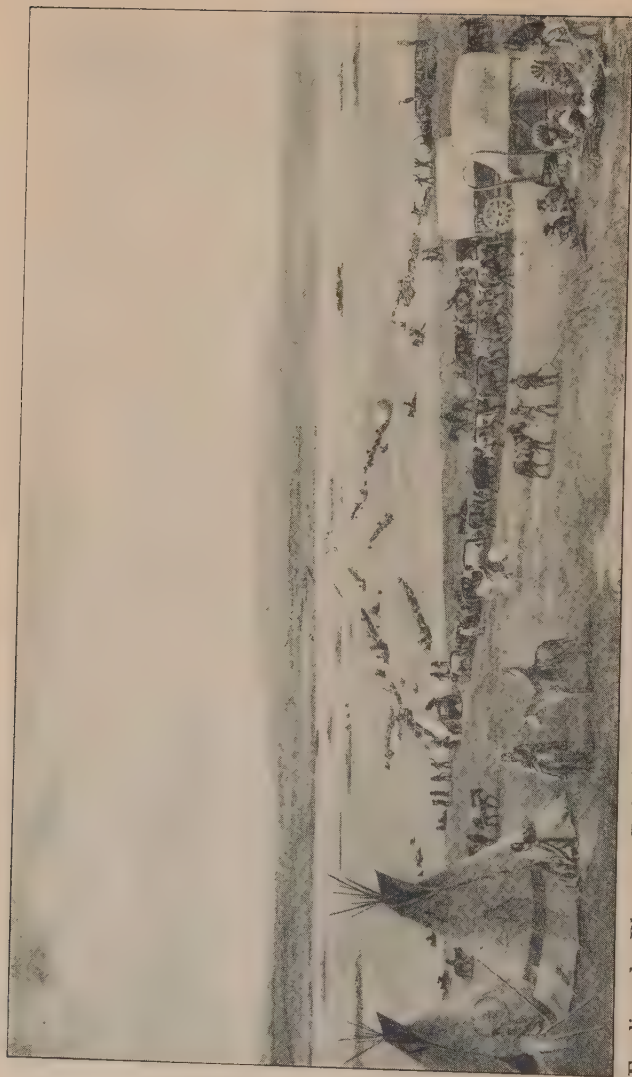
Sometimes we had trying storms that would wet

us to the skin in no time. One such I remember well, being caught in it while out on watch. The cattle traveled so fast that it was difficult to keep up with them. I could do nothing but follow, as it would have been impossible to turn them. I have always thought of this storm as a cloudburst. Anyhow, in an incredibly short time there was not a dry thread left on me. My boots were as full of water as if I had been wading over boot-top depth, and the water ran through my hat as though it were a sieve. I was almost blinded in the fury of the wind and water. Many tents were leveled by this storm. One of our neighboring trains suffered great loss by the sheets' of water on the ground washing away camp equipage, ox yokes, and all loose articles; and they narrowly escaped having a wagon engulfed in the raging torrent that came so unexpectedly upon them.

Fording a river was usually tiresome, and sometimes dangerous. I remember fording the Loup



Crossing a stream on a flatboat.



Fording the Platte. Painting by W. H. Jackson from a sketch made on the spot in 1866. This crossing is typical of ones with which the Meeker party were familiar.

Fork of the Platte with a large number of wagons fastened together with ropes or chains, so that if a wagon got into trouble the teams in front would help to pull it out. The quicksand would cease to sustain the wheels so suddenly that the wagon would drop a few inches with a jolt, and up again the wheel would come as new sand was struck; then down again it would go, up and down, precisely as if the wagons were passing over a rough corduroy road that "nearly jolted the life out of us," as the women folk said after it was over, and no wonder, for the river at this point was half a mile wide. Many of the pioneers crossed rivers in their wagon boxes and very few lost their lives in doing so.

The difference between one of these prairie-schooner wagon boxes and that of a scow-shaped, flat-bottomed boat is that the wagon box has the ribs on the outside, while in a boat they are on the inside.

Just why the prairie-schooner wagon body was built boat shape I have never been able to find out. That shape came in very handy, though, when we crossed the rivers on the Plains; but we had the same kind on the farm in Indiana, where we had no thought to use the schooners as boats.

We had to get the oxen across the rivers also, and sometimes that was no small job; in fact, it was more of a job than to get the outfit and wagon over. I knew some emigrants that had to tow over each animal separately, and some oxen and even men were drowned while thus crossing dangerous streams; but I was generally able to get all mine to swim over in a bunch.

It seems almost incredible how passively obedient cattle will become after long training on such a journey as that across the Plains. Indeed, the ox is always patient, and usually quite obedient; but when oxen get heated and thirsty, they become headstrong and reckless, and won't obey. I have known them to take off the road to a water hole when apparently nothing could stop them till they had gone so far into the mud and water that it was a hard job for them to get out again.

It was only with the help of the patient oxen that the pioneers were able to push the boundary of the nation across the continent. Their great work accomplished, the oxen have all but passed away, along with the picturesque wild animals they knew so well.

On the Plains, oxen were better than horses for getting their feed and fording streams. There was another and a very important advantage to oxen: the Indians could not run them off at night as easily as they could horses.

The ox has also had much to do with the settlement of our country. The pioneers could take care of an ox team in a new settlement so much more cheaply than they could a horse team that this fact alone would have made the oxen invaluable to them; but aside from this, oxen were better for the work in the clearings or for breaking up the vast stretches of wild prairie sod. We used to work four or five yoke to the plow, and when dark came we unhitched and turned them on the unbroken sod to pasture for the night.



Pioneers traveling through Mitchell Pass, near Scott's Bluff, Nebraska. Painting by W. H. Jackson from a sketch made on the spot on August 3, 1866.

I have often been asked how old an ox will live to be. I never knew of a yoke over fourteen years old, but I once heard of one that lived to be twenty-four.

The number of casualties in the army of emigrants I hesitate to guess at. Shall we say that ten per cent fell on the way? Many old plainsmen would think that estimate too low; yet ten per cent would give us five thousand lives as one year's toll paid for the peopling of the Oregon country. The roll call was never made, and we know not how many there were. We are lost in conjecture. We only know that vast numbers of unknown and unmarked graves have gone into oblivion.

The ravages of cholera carried off thousands. One family of seven lay down the Platte all in one grave; forty-one persons of one train dead in one day and

two nights tells but part of the dreadful story. The count of fifty-three freshly made graves in one camp ground left a vivid impress upon my mind that has never been effaced. But where now are those graves? They are irrevocably lost. I can recall to mind one point where seventy were buried in one little group, not one of the graves now to be seen — trampled out of sight by the hoofs of the millions of stock later passing over the trail.

Mrs. Cecilia McMillen Adams, late of Hillsboro, Oregon, kept a painstaking diary when she crossed the Plains in 1852. She counted the graves passed and noted down the number. In this diary, published in full by the Oregon Pioneer Association, I find the following entries :

June 14. Passed seven new-made graves.

June 16. Passed eleven new graves.

June 17. Passed six new graves.

June 18. We have passed twenty-one new graves today.

June 19. Passed thirteen graves today.

June 20. Passed ten graves.

June 21. [No report.]

June 22. Passed seven graves. If we should go by the camping grounds, we should see five times as many graves as we do.

This report by Mrs. Adams, coupled with the facts that a parallel column from which we have no report was traveling up the south side of the river, and that the outbreak of cholera had taken place originally in this column coming from the southeast, fully confirms the estimate of five thousand deaths on the Plains in 1852. It is probably under rather than over the actual number.



A tragedy of the Plains. From the motion picture "The Big Trail." Used by permission of the Fox Film Corporation.

To the emigrants the fact that all the graves were new-made brought an added touch of sadness. The graves of previous years had disappeared, leveled by the storms of wind or rain, by the hoofs of the stock, or possibly by ravages of the hungry wolf. Many believed that the Indians had robbed the graves for the clothing on the bodies. Whatever the cause, all, or nearly all, the graves of previous years were lost, and we knew that the last resting places of those whom we might leave behind would also soon be lost.

One of the incidents that made a profound impression upon the minds of all was the meeting with eleven wagons returning, and not a man left in the entire train. All the men had died and had been buried on the way, and the women and children were

returning to their homes alone from a point well up on the Platte, below Fort Laramie. The difficulties of the return trip were multiplied on account of the throng moving westward. How those women succeeded in their attempt, or what became of them, we never knew.



Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Scene reconstructed from material in Frémont's report and other descriptions of the 1840-1850 period. By W. H. Jackson.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INDIANS AND BUFFALOES ON THE PLAINS

OUR trail led straight across the Indian lands most of the way. The redmen naturally resented this intrusion into their territory; but they did not at this time fight against it. Their attitude was rather one of expecting pay for the privilege of using their land, their grass, and their game.

As soon as a part of our outfits were landed on the west bank of the Missouri River, our trouble with the Indians began, not in open hostilities, but in robbery under the guise of beggary. The word had been passed around in our little party that not a cent's worth of provisions would we give up to the Indians. We believed this policy to be our only safeguard from spoliation, and in that we were right.

Our women folk had been taken over the river

*Fox Film Corporation*

A familiar figure on the Plains.

with the first wagon and had gone on to a convenient camp site near by. The first show of weapons came from that side of our little community, when some of the bolder Pawnees attempted to pilfer around the wagons. No blood was shed, however, and indeed there was none shed by any of our party during the whole journey.

Soon after we had left the Missouri River we came to a small bridge over a washout across the road, evidently constructed by some train just ahead of us. The Indians had taken possession and were demanding pay for crossing. Some parties ahead of us had paid, while others were hesitating; but with a few there was a determined resolution not to pay. When our party came up, it remained for that fearless man, McAuley, to clear the way in short order, though the Indians were there in considerable numbers.

"You fellers come right on," said McAuley. "I'm goin' across that bridge if I have to run right over that Injun settin' there."

And he did almost run over the Indian, who at the last moment got out of the way of his team. Other teams followed in such quick succession and with such a show of guns that the Indians withdrew and left the road unobstructed.

Once I came very near to getting into serious trouble with three Indians on horseback. We had hauled my wagon away from the road to get water, I think, and had become separated from the passing throng. We were almost, but not quite, out of sight of any wagons or camps.

The Indians came up ostensibly to beg, but really to rob. They began first to solicit, and afterward to threaten. I started to drive on, not thinking they would use actual violence, as there were other wagons certainly within a half mile. I thought they were



Stampeding buffaloes. From the motion picture "The Big Trail." Used by permission of the Fox Film Corporation.

merely trying to frighten me into giving up at least a part of my outfit. Finally one of the Indians whipped out his knife and cut loose the cow that I was leading behind the wagon.

I did not have to ask for my gun. My wife, who had been watching from within the wagon, saw that the time had come to fight and handed my rifle to me from under the cover. Before the savages had time to do anything further they saw the gun. They were near enough to make it certain that one shot would take deadly effect; but instead of shooting one Indian, I trained the gun so that I might quickly choose among the three. In an instant each Indian had dropped to the side of his horse and was speeding away in great haste. The old saying that "almost anyone will fight when cornered" was exemplified in this incident; but I did not want any more such experiences, and afterward was careful not to be separated from the other wagons.

On the whole, we did not have much trouble with the Indians in 1852. The great numbers of the emigrants, coupled with the superiority of their arms, made them comparatively safe. It must be remembered, also, that this was before the treaty-making period, and the Indians of the Plains were not yet incensed against white men in general.

Herds of buffalo were more often seen than bands of Indians. The buffalo trails generally followed the water courses or paralleled them. But sometimes they would lead across the country with scarcely any deviation from a direct course. When on the road a herd would persistently follow their



The Platte River near Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Wagon trains coming up from the southeast first struck the Platte near this point, and here they sometimes encountered buffaloes in such numbers as to interrupt travel. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

leader, whether in the wild tumult of a stampede or in leisurely grazing as they traveled.

When not on the road, the buffalo were shy, difficult to approach, and hard to bag, even with the long-range rifles of the pioneers. But for nearly a thousand miles a goodly supply of fresh meat was obtainable from the adventurous hunters, who, in spite of the appalling cholera epidemic that had overtaken the moving column of the emigrants, would venture out on the chase, the temptation being too great for them to restrain their ardor.

A story is told, and it is doubtless true, of a chase in the upper regions of the Missouri, where the leaders of the buffalo herd, either voluntarily or by pres-

sure from the mass behind, leaped to their death over a perpendicular bluff a hundred feet high, overlooking the river. The herd followed blindly until not only hundreds but thousands lay struggling at the foot of the bluff. They piled one upon another till the space between the river and the bluff was bridged, and the last of the victims plunged headlong into the river.

Well up on the Platte, but east of Fort Laramie, we had the experience of a night stampede that struck terror to the heart of man and beast. It so happened that we had brought our cattle into camp that evening, a thing we did not usually do. We had driven the wagons into a circle, with the tongue of each wagon chained to the hind axletree of the wagon ahead. The cattle were led inside the circle and the tents were pitched outside.

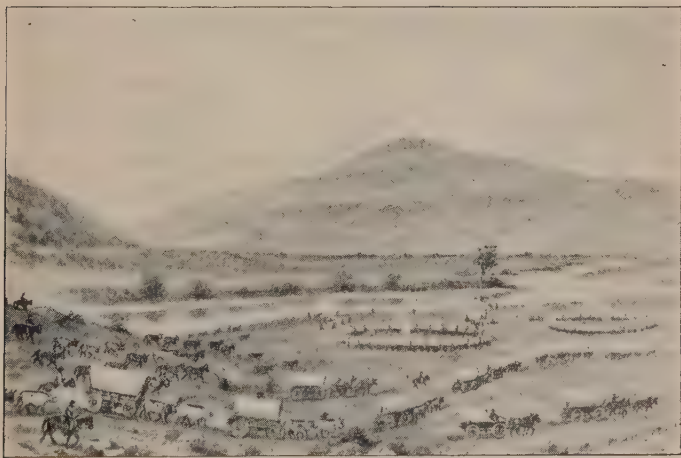
Usually I would be out on the range with the oxen at night, and if I slept at all, snuggled up close to the back of my good ox, Dandy; but that night, with the oxen safe inside the enclosure, I slept in the wagon. William Buck and my brother Oliver were in a tent near by, sleeping on the ground.

Suddenly there was a sound like an approaching storm. Almost instantly every animal in the corral was on its feet. The alarm was given and all hands turned out, not yet knowing what caused the general commotion. The roar we heard was like that of a heavy railroad train passing at no great distance on a still night. As by instinct all seemed to know suddenly that it was a buffalo stampede. The tents were emptied of their inmates, the weak parts of the

corral guarded, the frightened cattle looked after, and everyone in the camp was on the alert to watch what was coming.

In the darkness of the night we could see first the forms of the leaders, and then such dense masses that we could not distinguish one buffalo from the other. How long they were in passing we forgot to note; it seemed like an age. When daylight came, the few stragglers yet to be seen fell under the unerring aim of the frontiersman's rifle.

We were lucky, but our neighbors in camp did not escape loss. Some were detained for days, gathering up their scattered stock, while others were unable to find their teams. Some of the animals never were recovered.



Red Buttes, near Casper, Wyoming, where the Oregon Trail leaves the North Platte River to cross to the Sweetwater. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRAILING THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN LAND

As the column of wagons passed up the Platte in what is now western Nebraska, there was some relief from the dust. Now too the throng was visibly thinned out. Some had pushed on beyond the congested district, while others had lagged behind. And now it also became apparent that the missing dead had left not only a void in the hearts of their comrades, but also a visible space upon the road.

At this part of the journey we saw instances of mirages — images of scenes that we saw as clearly as if we were within a few miles of them. We saw sheets of water so real as to be almost within our grasp yet never reached, hills and valleys that we never traversed, beautiful pictures on the horizon and sometimes above.

When we reached the higher lands of Wyoming, our traveling became still more pleasant. The nights were cooler, and we had clearer, purer water. As we gradually ascended the Sweetwater, life grew more tolerable and discomfort less acute.

We were now nearing the crest of the continent. The climb was so gradual, however, as to be hardly observable. The summit of the Rocky Mountains through the South Pass offers an easy gateway to the West.

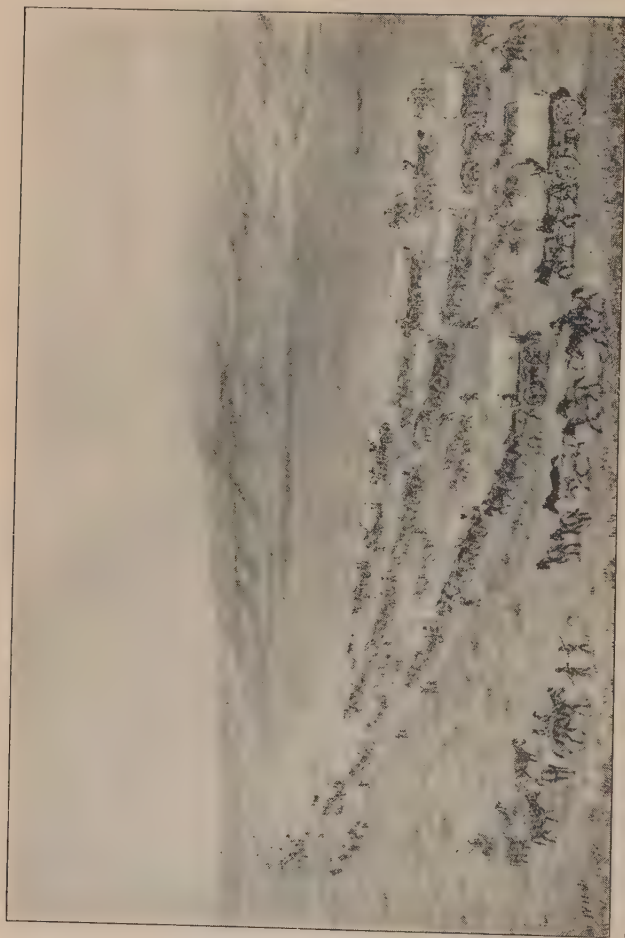
The reader may think of the South Pass as a precipitous defile through narrow canyons and deep gorges. Nothing is farther from the fact. One can drive through this Pass for several miles without



Independence Rock, Wyoming, on the Sweetwater fifty miles west of Casper. The Oregon Trail passes around the south end of the rock. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

realizing that the dividing line between the waters of the Pacific and those of the Atlantic has been passed. The road is over a broad, open, undulating plain of high altitude — a plateau; the approach is by easy grades, and the ascent from the east is scarcely noticeable. This is a region of scant herbage and almost no water, except at river crossings, for on this stretch of the trail the way leads across the water courses and not with them.

All who were toiling west in the old days looked upon this spot as the turning point of their journey. There we felt that we had left the worst of the trip behind us. Poor souls that we were! We did not know that our worst mountain climbing lay beyond the summit of the Rockies, over the rugged Western ranges.



South Pass and Wind River Mountains. Notice the parallel lines of travel that were necessitated by the flood of emigration of 1852. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

Passing Pacific Springs at the summit, we rolled over to Big Sandy Creek. At this point we left the Mormon Trail and took the Sublette Cut-Off over to Bear River. This was a shorter trail to the Oregon country, made by William Sublette, one of the American fur traders of the early days. The earlier emigrants to Oregon had gone on to Fort Bridger before leaving the Mormon Trail.

The most attractive natural phenomenon encountered on the whole trip was found at the Soda Springs, near Bear River in Idaho. Some of the springs, in fact, are right in the bed of the river. One of them, Steamboat Spring, was spouting at regular intervals as we passed.

Just after leaving Soda Springs our little company of friends separated. The McAuleys and William Buck took the trail to California, while with Oliver and the Davenport brothers we went northwest to Oregon. Jacob, the younger of the brothers, fell sick and gradually grew worse as the journey grew harder. Shortly after reaching Portland the poor boy died.

Thomas McAuley settled in the Hobart Hills in California and became a respected citizen of that state. When last I heard of him he was eighty-eight years old.

William Buck has long since lain down to rest. A few years after we had parted on the big bend of the Bear River, I heard from William in a way that was characteristic of the man. He had been back to "the States," as we then called the eastern part of our country, and returning to California by way of

*W. H. Jackson*

Bear River at Soda Springs, Idaho. The flowing spring at the water's edge is the one that was most frequently noted by the pioneer travelers. The Oregon Trail passes just above the left bank of the river.

the Isthmus of Panama, he had brought fifty swarms of bees. Three of these swarms he sent up to me in Washington. As far as I know, these were the first honey bees in that state. William Buck was a man who was always doing a good turn for his friends.

When the Snake River was reached, and in fact even before that, the heat again became oppressive, the dust stifling, and the thirst at times almost maddening. In some places we could see the water of the Snake winding through the lava gorges; but we could not reach it, as the river ran in the inaccessible depths of the canyon. Sickness again became prevalent, and another outbreak of cholera claimed many victims.

There were but few ferries, and none at all in many

places where crossings were to be made. Even where there was a ferry, the charges were so high that they were out of reach of most of the emigrants. As for me, all my funds had been absorbed in procuring my outfit at Eddyville, in Iowa. We had not dreamed that there would be use for money on the Plains, where there were neither supplies nor people. But we soon found out our mistake.

The crossing of the Snake River, although late in the journey, gave us the opportunity to mend matters. About thirty miles below Salmon Falls the dilemma confronted us of either crossing the Snake River or having our teams starve on the trip down the river on the south bank. We found that some emigrants had calked two wagon beds and lashed them together, and were using this craft for crossing.



Fort Hall, Idaho. Scene reconstructed and painted by W. H. Jackson on the basis of material gathered from Osburn Cross's report, made in about 1840, and other descriptions of the time.

But they would not help others across for less than three to five dollars a wagon, the passengers swimming their own stock.

If others could cross in wagon beds, why couldn't we do likewise? Without more ado all the old clothing that could possibly be spared was assembled, and tar buckets were scraped. Old chisels and broken knives were hunted up, and a boat repairing and calking campaign began. Very soon the wagon box rode placidly, even if not gracefully, on the waters of the Snake River.

My boyhood experience at playing with logs and leaky old skiffs in the waters of White River now served me well; I could row a boat. My first venture across the Snake River was with the wagon gear run over the wagon box, the whole being gradually worked out into deep water. The load was so heavy that a very small margin was left to prevent the water from breaking over the sides, and some water did enter as light ripples on the surface struck the *Mary Jane* — for we had duly named our craft. I got over safely, but after that I took lighter loads, and I really enjoyed the work, with the change from the intolerable dust to the clear atmosphere of the river.

Some people were so infatuated with the idea of floating on the water that they were easily persuaded by an unprincipled trader at the second crossing to dispose of their teams for a song and to embark in their wagon beds for a voyage down the river. A number of people thus lost everything they had, and some even lost their lives. After terrible hard-



The prairie wagon used as a boat.

ships, the survivors reached the road again, to become objects of charity. I knew one survivor who was out seven days without food other than a scant supply of berries and vegetable growth and "a few crickets, but not many."

We had no trouble to get the cattle across, although the river was wide. Dandy would do almost anything I asked of him; so, leading him to the water's edge, with a little coaxing I got him into swimming water and guided him across with the wagon bed. The others all followed, having been driven into deep water after the leader.

We had not finished crossing when tempting offers came from others to cross them; but all our party said, "No, we must travel." The rule had been adopted to travel some distance every day when it was possible. "Travel, travel, travel," was the watchword, and nothing could divert us from that resolution. On the third day we were ready to pull

out from the river, with the cattle rested by the enforced wait.

Now the question was, What about the second crossing? Those who had crossed over the river must somehow get back across the second part of the loop. It was less than one hundred and fifty miles to the place where we must again cross the river. I could walk that distance in three days, while it would take our teams ten. Could I go on ahead, procure a wagon box, and start a ferry of my own? The thought brought an affirmative answer at once.

With only food and a small blanket for load, I walked to the second crossing of the Snake River near old Fort Boise. It may be ludicrous, but it is true, that the most I remember about that tramp is the jack rabbits. Such droves of these animals, as I traveled down the Boise valley, I had never seen before and I never saw again.

I soon obtained a wagon bed, and all day long for several days I was at work crossing people. I continued at this till our teams came up, and for a few days after that. I left the river with a hundred and ten dollars in my pocket. All but two dollars and seventy-five cents of this was gone before I arrived in Portland.

I did not look upon that work as other than a part of the trip — a natural desire to do the best I could. None of us thought we were doing a heroic act in crossing the Plains and meeting emergencies as they arose. In fact, we did not think at all of that phase of the question. Many have, however, in later life



Near Glenn's Ferry at the Three Island Crossing of the Snake River. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

looked upon their achievement with pardonable pride, and some in a vainglorious mood.

But we could not delay longer, even to make money. I thought I could see signs of failing strength in my young wife and the baby. Not for mountains of gold would we jeopardize their lives.

All along the way the baby and the little mother had been tenderly cared for. We used to clear away a space in the wagon bed for them to take a nap together. The slow swaying of the wagon over smooth, sandy stretches made a rock-a-by movement that would lull them off to dreamland and make them forget the weary way.

When we left the crossing near Fort Boise, the mother and baby were placed in a small wagon. A sprightly yoke of oxen was hitched to it that they

might get an early start and keep out of the dust. What few delicacies the pioneers had were given to them. By this tender care the mother and child were enabled to continue to the end of the long journey, though the brave little mother was frail and weak from the wearisome struggle before we reached a resting place at last.

What became of that baby? He thrived and grew to manhood, making his home in California. Some of his grandchildren are now grown to manhood and womanhood.





Entering the Blue Mountains of Oregon from the south, on the trail from Fort Boise to The Dalles. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

CHAPTER NINE

REACHING THE END OF THE TRAIL

AFTER leaving the Snake River we had one of the worst stretches of the trying journey. From the second crossing of the Snake, at old Fort Boise, to The Dalles is approximately three hundred and fifty miles over mountains and deserts. It became a serious question with many travelers whether there would be enough provisions left to keep them from starvation and whether their teams could muster strength to take the wagons in. Many wagons were left by the wayside. Everything that could possibly be spared shared the same fate. Provisions, and provisions only, were religiously cared for. Considering the weakened condition of both man and beast, it was small wonder that some ill-advised per-

sons should take to the river in their wagon beds, many thus going to their death.

The dust got deeper every day. Going through it was like wading in water as to resistance. Often it would lie in the road fully six inches deep, so fine that a person wading through it would scarcely leave a track. And when disturbed, such clouds! No words can describe it.

I have no doubt that I have walked over two thousand miles on different trips across the continent with an ox team, part of the time from necessity but often when hunting for a camping place, frequently four or six miles at a time. The oxen usually would travel two miles an hour while my easy gait would be three, so that by timing myself I could easily tell how far I was ahead and how long it would take the oxen to catch up. But the long walk was this first one across the Plains in 1852, after the teams weakened and the dust became intolerable in the wagon — then is when the walking became wearisome, so wearisome that I lost my weight rapidly, though apparently not any strength.

At length, after we had endured five long months of soul-trying travel and had covered about eighteen hundred miles, counting from the crossing of the Missouri, we dragged ourselves on to the end of the overland trail at The Dalles on the Columbia River. From here my wife and I, with the baby, went by boat down the river, while Oliver took the ox team on to Portland by the land way, over what was called the Barlow Cut-Off.

The Dalles is a name given to the peculiar lava



The Barlow Cut-Off south of Mount Hood, Oregon. By this trail Mr. Meeker's brother Oliver traveled on to Portland. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

rock formation that strikes across the Columbia nearly two hundred miles from the mouth. These rocks throw the great stream into a fury of foaming rapids. An Indian legend says that the Bridge of the Gods was once near The Dalles, but that the bridge broke and fell.

On the September day in 1852 when we reached The Dalles, we found there a great crowd of travel-worn people. The appearance of this crowd beggars description. Their dress was as varied as pieces in a crazy quilt. Here was a matronly dame in clean apparel, but without shoes; her husband perhaps lacked both shoes and hat. Youngsters of all sizes were running about with scarcely enough clothing to cover their nakedness. Some suits and dresses were so patched that it was impossible to tell what

was the original cloth. The color of practically everybody's clothing was that of desert dust.

Every little while other sweat-streaked, motley-dressed homeseekers would straggle up to this end of the long trail. The assemblage was constantly changing. It was a coming-and-going congregation; but the constant gathering and constant departures of the immigrants did not materially change the numbers encamped or the general appearance of the crowd.

Almost every nationality was represented among them. All traces of race peculiarity and race prejudice, however, had been ground away in the mill of adversity. The trying times through which these pioneers had just passed had brought all to a kinship of feeling such as only trial and danger can beget.

Their thoughts went back to their old homes, or to the loved ones that they had laid away tenderly in the shifting sands of the Plains. Most of them faced the future with fortitude; the difficulties they had met and mastered had but steeled them to meet the difficulties ahead. There was an undercurrent of gladness in their souls with the thought that they had achieved the end of the overland trail. They were ready now to go on down the Columbia to find their new homes in this great, unknown Land of Promise.

Friendships, sincere and lasting, came as one of the sweet rewards of those days of common struggle and adversity. The great trip had molded this army of homeseekers into one homogeneous mass, a common brotherhood, that left a lasting impression upon the participants, and although few are left now, not

one but will greet an old comrade as a brother, with hearty and oftentimes tearful congratulations.

We camped but two days on the bank of the Columbia River. When I say "we," let it be understood that I mean myself, my young wife, and the baby boy who was but seven weeks old when the start was made from Eddyville.

I do not remember the embarking on the great scow for our trip down the Columbia to the Cascades. But incidents of the voyage come to me as vividly as if they had happened but yesterday.

Those who took passage felt that the journey was ended. The cattle had been unyoked for the last time; the wagons had been rolled to the last bivouac; the embers of the last camp fire had died out. We were entering now upon a new field with



Nearing the end of the trail. From the Blue Mountains to the valley of the Columbia in Oregon. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

new present experiences, and with new expectancy for the morrow.

The scow, or lighter, upon which we took passage was decked over, but without railing, offering a smooth surface upon which to pile our belongings. These, in the majority of cases, made but a very small showing. The whole deck surface of the scow was covered with the remnants of the homeseekers' outfits, which in turn were covered by the owners, either sitting or reclining upon their possessions, with but scant room to change position or move about in any way. There must have been a dozen families or more on the boat, or about sixty persons. These were principally women and children; the young men and some of the older ones were still struggling on the mountain trail to get the teams through to the west side of the Cascade Mountains.

As we went floating down that wonderful old river, the deep depression of spirits that, for lack of a better name, we call "the blues," seized upon us. Do you wonder why? We were like an army that had burned the bridges behind it. We had scant knowledge of what lay in the track before us. Here we were, more than two thousand miles from home — separated from it by a trackless, uninhabited waste of country. It was impossible for us to retrace our steps. Go ahead we must, no matter what we were to encounter.

Then, too, we had for months borne the burden of duties that could not be avoided or delayed, until many were on the verge of collapse from strain and overwork. Some were sick, and all were reduced in



The travel-worn wanderers sing "Home, Sweet Home."

flesh from the urgent toil at camp duty and from lack of variety of food. Such was the condition of the motley crowd of sixty persons as we slowly neared that wonderful channel through which the great Columbia flows while passing the Cascade range.

For myself, I can truly say that the journey had not drawn on my vitality as it had with so many. True, I had been worked down in flesh, having lost nearly twenty pounds; but what weight I had left was the bone and sinew of my system. The good body my parents had given me carried me then and afterward through many hardships without great distress.

In our company, a party of three, a young married couple and an unmarried sister, lounged on their belongings, listlessly watching the ripples on the water, as did also others of the party. But little conversation was passing. Each seemed to be communing with himself or herself, but it was easy to

*Kiser Brothers*

St. Peter's Dome — one of the sentinels of the Columbia.

see what were the thoughts occupying the minds of all. The young husband, it was plain to be seen, would soon complete that greater journey to the unknown beyond, a condition that weighed so heavily upon the ladies of the party that they could ill conceal their solicitude and sorrow. Finally, to cheer up the sick husband and brother, the ladies began in sweet, subdued voices to sing the old familiar song of "Home, Sweet Home," whereupon others of the party joined in the chorus with increased volume of sound. As the echo died away, at the moment of gliding under the shadow of the high mountain, the second verse was begun, but was never finished. If an electric shock had startled every individual of the party, there could have been no more simultaneous effect than when the second line of the second verse was reached, when instead of song, sobs and outcries of grief poured forth from all lips. It seemed as if there were a tumult of despair mingled with prayer. The rugged boatmen rested upon their oars in awe and gave way, in sympathy with the scene before them, until it could be truly said no dry eyes were left nor aching heart but was relieved. Like the downpour of a summer shower that suddenly clears the atmosphere to welcome the bright shining sun that follows, so this sudden outburst of grief cleared away the despondency, to be replaced by an exalted, exhilarating feeling of buoyancy and hopefulness. The tears were not dried till mirth took possession — a real hysterical manifestation of the whole party, ending all depression for the rest of the trip.

*Benjamin A. Gifford*

Multnomah Falls, along the Columbia between the Cascades and Portland.

At the landing we separated and knew each other but slightly afterward. The great Oregon country, then including Puget Sound, was large enough to swallow up a thousand such immigrations and yet individuals be lost to one another.

On this last stage of the journey other parties had much more trying experiences than ours. John Whitacre, afterward governor of Oregon, was the head of a party of nine that constructed a raft at The Dalles out of dry poles hauled from the adjacent country. While their stock was started out over the trail, their two wagons were put upon the raft. With the women and children in the wagons, perched on the provisions and bedding, the start was made

to float down the river to the Cascades, a falls about halfway between The Dalles and Portland.

They had hardly begun the journey when the waves swept over the raft. It was like a submerged foundation upon which their wagons stood. A landing a few miles out of The Dalles averted a total wreck and afforded opportunity to strengthen the buoyancy of the raft with extra timber carried upon the backs of the men for long distances.

Then the question arose, How should they know when they would reach the falls? Would they be able to discover the falls in time to make a landing? Their fears finally got the better of them and a line was run ashore; but instead of making a landing, they found themselves hard aground out of reach of land, except by wading a long distance. This occurred while they were many miles above the falls, or Cascades. At last they gave up the raft and procured a scow. In this they reached the head of the Cascades in safety.

. We had found a little steamer to carry us from the Cascades to Portland, along with most of the company that had floated in the scow down the river from The Dalles.

As we neared Portland we felt that a long task had been completed. Yet reaching the end of the overland trail did not mean that our pioneer struggles were over. Before us lay still another task — the conquest of the new land. And it was no easy work, we were to learn, to find a home or make one in the Western wilderness.

PART TWO

SETTLING IN THE NORTHWEST
COUNTRY



Looking for work on the good ship *Mary Melville*.

CHAPTER TEN

GETTING A NEW START IN THE NEW LAND

ON the first day of October, 1852, at about nine o'clock at night, with a bright moon shining, we reached Portland.¹ Oliver met us; he had come ahead by the trail and had found a place for us to lodge.

I carried my wife, who had fallen ill, in my arms up the steep bank of the Willamette River and three blocks away to the lodging house, which was kept by a colored man.

"Why, suh, I didn't think yuse could do that, yuse don't look it," said my colored friend, as I placed my wife on the clean bed in a cozy little room.

This was the first house we had been in for five months. From April until October we had been on the move. Never a roof had been over our heads other than the wagon cover or tent, and no softer

¹ The map on page 106 will be helpful in reading the story of Mr. Meeker's adventures in the Oregon country.

bed had we known than the ground or the bottom of the wagon.

Portland was no paradise at that time. It would be difficult to imagine a sorrier-looking place than the one that confronted us upon arrival. Some rain had fallen, and more soon followed.

With the stumps and logs, mud, and uneven places, it was no easy matter to find a resting place for the tented city so continuously enlarging. People seemed to be dazed; they did not know what to do. There was insufficient shelter to house all. Work for all was impossible.

Discouragement and despair seized upon some, while others began to enlarge their circle of observations. A few had friends and acquaintances in other parts of the West and relieved the situation by going to join them; while suffering, both mental and physical, followed the arrival of the winter storm that ensued. A few lay down in their beds not to arise again; a few required time to recuperate their strength; but a short time found the majority as active and hearty as if nothing had happened. Soon the atmosphere of discontent disappeared and general cheerfulness prevailed. I can truly say I do not remember the experience as a personal hardship.

Oliver and I had between us a cash capital of about three dollars. It was clear that we must find work at once, so at earliest dawn the day after I arrived Oliver took the trail leading down the river, to search for something to do. I had a possible opportunity for work and wages already in mind.

As we were passing up the river, a few miles from Portland, on the evening of our arrival, a bark lay seemingly right in our path as we steamed by. This vessel looked to our inexperienced eyes like a veritable monster, with hull towering high above our heads and masts reaching to the sky. Probably not one of that whole party of frontiersmen had ever before seen a deep-sea vessel.

The word went around that the bark was bound for Portland with a cargo of merchandise and was to take a return cargo of lumber. As we passed her, there flashed through my mind the thought that there might be opportunity for work on that vessel next day, when the boat would reach Portland and would be unloaded and loaded again. Sure enough, when morning came, the stanch bark *Mary Melville* lay quietly in front of the mill.

Without loss of time my inquiry was made: "Do you want any men on board this ship?"

A gruff-looking fellow eyed me all over as much as to say, "Not you, anyhow." But he answered, "Yes. Go below and get your breakfast."

I fairly stammered out, "I must go and see my wife first, and let her know where I am."

Thereupon came back a growl: "Of course, that will be the last of you! That's the way with these newcomers, always hunting for work and never wanting it." This last aside to a companion, in my hearing.

I swallowed my indignation, assured the man that I would be back in five minutes, and went post-haste to impart the good news.

Put yourself in my place, you who have never come under the domination of a surly mate on a sailing vessel of seventy years ago. My ears fairly tingled with anger at the harshness of the orders, but I stuck to the work, smothering my rage at being berated while doing my very best. As the day went on I realized that the man was not angry; he had merely fallen into that way of talking. The sailors paid slight heed to what he said. Before night the fellow seemed to let up on me, while increasing his tirades at the regular men. The second and the third day wore off. I had blistered hands, but never a word about wages or pay.

"Say, boss, I'se got to pay my rent, and we'se always gits our pay in advance. I doan' like to ask you, but can't you git the old boss to put up some-thin' on your work?"

I could plainly see that my landlord was serving notice to pay or move. What should I do? Suppose the old skipper should discharge me for asking for wages before the end of the week. But when I told him what I wanted the money for, the old man's eyes moistened. Without a word he gave me more money than I had asked for, and that night the steward handed me a bottle of wine for the "missus." I knew that it came from the old captain.

The baby's Sunday visit to the ship, the Sunday dinner in the cabin, the presents of delicacies that followed, even from the gruff mate, made me feel that under all this roughness lay a tender humanity. Away out here, three thousand miles from home,

the same sort of people lived as those I had left behind me.

Then came this message :

ST. HELEN, *October 7th*, 1852

Dear Brother : Come as soon as you can. Have rented a house, sixty boarders. This is going to be the place. Shall I send you money ?

OLIVER P. MEEKER

The mate importuned me to stay until the cargo was on board. I did stay until the last stick of lumber was stowed, the last pig in the pen, and the ship swinging off, bound on her outward voyage. I felt as if I had an interest in her.

Sure enough, I found St. Helen to be "the place." Here was to be the terminus of the steamship line from San Francisco. "Wasn't the company building this wharf?" "They wouldn't set sixty men to work on the dock unless they meant business." "Ships can't get up the Willamette — that's nothing but a creek. The big city is going to be here."

This was the talk that greeted my ears as I went looking about. We had carried my wife, this time in a chair, to our hotel — yes, our hotel! — and there we had placed her, and the baby too, of course, in the best room the house afforded.

One January morning in 1853, our sixty men boarders did not go to work at the dock building as usual. Orders had come to suspend work. Nobody knew why, or for how long. We soon learned that the steamship company had given up the fight against Portland and would thenceforward run its steamers to that port. The dock was never finished

and was allowed to fall into decay. With our boarders scattered, our occupation was gone, and our supplies were in great part rendered worthless to us by the change.

Meantime, snow had fallen to a great depth. The price of forage for cattle rose by leaps and bounds, and we found that we must part with half of our stock to save the rest. It might be necessary to provide feed for a month, or for three months; we could not tell. The last cow was given up that we might keep one yoke of oxen, so necessary for the work on a new place.

The search for a claim began at once. After one day's struggle against the current of the Lewis River, and a night standing in a snow and sleet storm around a camp fire of green wood, Oliver and I found our ardor cooled a little. Two hours sufficed to take us back home next morning.

Claims we must have, though. That was what we had come to Oregon for. We were going to be farmers; wife and I had made the bargain that we were going to be, before we closed the other more important contract. We were still of one mind as to both contracts.

Early in January of 1853 the snow began disappearing rapidly, and the search for claims became more earnest. Finally, about the twentieth of January, I drove my stake for a claim. It included the site where the city of Kalama now stands.

With my mind's eye I can see our first cabin as vividly as on the day it was finished. It was placed among the trees on a hillside, with the door in the

end facing the beautiful river. The rocky nature of the site permitted little grading, but it added to the picturesqueness.

The great river, the Columbia, was a mile wide at the point where our house stood. Once a day at least it seemed to tire from its ceaseless flow and to take a nooning spell. This was when the tides from the ocean held back the waters of the river. Immediately in front of our landing lay a small island of a few acres, covered with heavy timber and driftwood. This has long since been washed away, and ships now pass over the place in safety.

The cabin stood about a hundred yards back from the river, just above the river bottom and on the rather steep slope of the solid, rocky bank, with a door and projecting roof on the river-view end. The ribs projected in front a few feet to provide an open front porch with a ground floor, not for ornament but for storage of the dry wood and kindling so necessary for the comfort and convenience of the mistress of the house. The side walls of the cabin were barely high enough to enable us to stand up straight inside when the roof was on. The clapboard roof protected us from the rain and served as a ceiling above our heads. At the back end a low cobblestone chimney served to keep the inner cabin clear of smoke from the cheerful fire that not only warmed the cabin, but likewise served as the kitchen range, without cover, upon which to cook the simple food, and provided light as well.

The furniture, all homemade, consisted of a table made of some drift lumber picked up in the Columbia River, stools instead of chairs, a folding bed with wooden hinges near the floor, to close up against the wall during the day. Moss between the logs, closely packed, served to keep gusts of wind out and confine the heat of the fire to keep the cabin warm and comfortable, albeit the roof supplied abundant ventilation. The site upon which this cabin stood is but a little more than a stone's throw from where the Northern Pacific Railroad depot at Kalama now stands. The cabin has long since disappeared, but I can yet identify the spot upon which it stood.

The cabin was not large nor did it contain much in the way of furnishings; but it was home — our home.

Our home! What a thrill of joy that thought brought to us! It was the first home we had ever had. We had been married nearly two years, yet this was really our first abiding place, for all other dwellings had been merely way stations on our march from Indianapolis to this cabin. The thought brought not only happiness but health to us. The glow returned to my wife's cheek, the dimple to the baby's. And such a baby! In the innocence of our souls we honestly thought we had the smartest, cutest baby on earth.

We had graded into the hill a little for the rear end of the cabin, so that from the hillside next to the chimney one could look down the chimney to the fire below without craning his neck. On several



Our first cabin home.

nights we heard noises, not like the howl of a wolf but more like the scream of a frightened woman, which we thought, and I still think, were made by a cougar prowling in the brush and timber near by. The little wife became uneasy, fearing the “thing” might come down the chimney, but I quieted her fears by claiming there was no more danger of that than that Santa Claus would come that way. Afterward I learned that these animals were dangerous

when pressed by hunger and that a child had been killed by one. Anyway, I should prefer to have a stout cabin wall between me and one of them than to meet it in open combat, as did one of our pioneers, a Mr. Stocking, who killed his cougar in a hand-to-hand fight.

Scarcely had we settled in our new home before there came a mighty flood that covered the waters of the river with wrecks of property. Oliver and I, with one of our neighbors, began to secure the logs that came floating down in great numbers. In a very short time we had a raft that was worth a good sum of money, could we but get it to market.

Encouraged by this find, we immediately turned our attention to some fine timber standing close to the bank near by, and began hand-logging to supplement what we had already secured afloat. This work soon gave us ample means to buy our winter supplies, even though flour was fifty dollars a barrel. And yet, because of that same hand-logging work, my wife came very near becoming a widow one morning before breakfast; but she did not know of it until long afterward.

It occurred in this way. We did not then know how to scaffold up above the tough, swelled bases of the large trees, and this made it very difficult to chop them down. So we burned through them. We bored two holes at an angle to meet inside the inner bark, and when we got a fire started there the heart of the tree would burn through, leaving an outer shell of bark.

One morning, as usual, I was up early. After

lighting the fire in the stove and putting on the kettle, I hastened to the burning timber to start the logging fires afresh. As I neared a clump of three giants, two hundred and fifty feet tall, one began toppling over toward me. In my confusion I ran across the path where it fell. This tree had scarcely reached the ground when a second started to fall almost parallel to it, the two tops barely thirty feet apart and the limbs flying in several directions. I was between the two trees. If I had not become entangled in some brush, I should have been crushed by the second falling tree. It was an escape so marvelous as almost to lead one to think that there is such a thing as a charmed life.

In rafting our precious accumulations of timber down the Columbia River to Oak Point, we were carried by the current past the place where we had expected to sell our logs at six dollars a thousand feet. Following the raft to the larger waters, we finally reached Astoria, where we sold the logs for eight dollars a thousand instead of six, thus profiting by our misfortune.

But this final success had meant an involuntary plunge off the raft into the river with my boots on, for me, and three days and nights of ceaseless toil and watching for all of us. We voted unanimously that we would have no more such work.

The flour sack was nearly empty when I left home. We were expecting to be absent but one night, and we had been gone a week. There were no neighbors nearer our cabin than four miles, and no roads — scarcely a trail. The only communication was by

the river. What about the wife and baby alone in the cabin, with the deep timber at the rear and a heavy jungle of brush in front? Happily we found them all right upon our return.



This is the region in which Ezra Meeker settled in 1852, when it was all known as the Oregon country and had not been divided into Washington and Oregon. The journey from Portland to Kalama, where the first cabin was built, is shown by line 1. The line marked 2 shows the route followed in the journey to explore the Puget Sound region. The brothers went as far as Port Townsend, but turned back to make the second home at Steilacoom. Line 3 is the trail through the Natchess Pass, the trail that Ezra Meeker followed to meet his father's party coming up through the Blue Mountains.



A lesson in the art of clambaking.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HUNTING FOR ANOTHER HOME SITE

THE February sun of 1853 shone almost like mid-summer. The clearing grew as if by magic. We could not resist the temptation to begin planting, and before March was gone the rows of peas, lettuce, and onions growing on the river bank could be seen from the cabin door, thirty rods away.

One day I noticed some three-cornered bits of potatoes that had been cut out, not bigger than the end of my finger. These all ran to a point as though cut out from a pattern. The base, or outer skin, all contained an eye of the potato. My wife said these pieces would grow, and we could have the body of the potatoes to eat. This would have seemed a good scheme had we been able to plant at once, but by this time we had been forcibly reminded that there was another impending flood for June, incident

to the melting of the snow on the mountains, a thousand miles away as the channel ran. The experiment would not cost much, though; so the potato eyes were carefully saved and spread out on shelves where they became so dry that they would rattle like dry onion sets when handled.

Every steamer outward-bound carried potatoes for the San Francisco market until it became a question whether enough would be left for seed, so that three and even four cents a pound was asked and paid for sorry-looking culls. We must have seed, and so, after experimenting with the dried eyes, planted in moist earth in a box kept warm in the cabin, we became convinced that the lady of the household was right, and we ate potatoes freely even at these famine prices. Sure enough, the flood came and the planting delayed until July, and yet a crop was raised from these dried "sets" which, unharvested, brought in nearly four thousand dollars. We did not stay to reap this harvest, nor in fact, to cultivate it, leaving that to another who became interested in the venture.

But just now let us take a peep into some of our inmost thoughts and feelings about our new pioneer home. We had taken this squatter claim, it must be said, more from necessity than from choice. I had to secure a place where I could provide a roof at once to shelter my dear ones from the winter storms of 1853. To be sure we had felt a thrill of joy in the building of this, our first home; yet it was truly far below the ideal we had pictured in our dreams of a home in the Far West.

Remember we had resolved together in our youth to be farmers. We had left a long stretch of rich, unoccupied land in Iowa in response to the lure of richer promises in Oregon, the fertile realm, where "ships could go down to the sea." I had no thought ever of being a sailor, but I did long to be where I could have access to the great wide world.

We had not for an instant given up our resolution to be farmers on our own ground; but here now, as we looked out of the cabin window, what did we see? A stony hillside skirting a valley—a narrow valley it was, covered with forest and brush, subject to overflow; great forests of giant timber, utterly precluding the thought of neighboring farms; no neighbors at the time nearer than three miles; no roads; nothing, in a word, that we had dreamed of finding in Oregon.

I had practiced deceit with my wife in assuming a cheerfulness I did not feel. I came to know that she was doing the same thing. This state of feelings could not go on always; so one day we made a confession, and whether manly and womanly or not, expressed our disappointment in tears, and soon felt the better for it. It was this confession that opened the way for a change in our plans and our fortunes.

In April of 1853 the word had begun to pass around that we were to have a new territory to embrace the country north of the Columbia River. Its capital was to be on Puget Sound. When this happened, we here on the Columbia would be way off to the south and out of touch with the people who

would shortly become a great, separate commonwealth.

Besides, had we not come all the way across the Plains to get to the seaboard, and here we were simply on the bank of a river — a great river, to be sure, with its ship channel, but then, that bar at the mouth — what about it? And the June freshets — what about them?

It seemed advisable to look about a little before making a move; so leaving my wife and baby in the cabin home one bright morning in May, Oliver and I each made a pack of forty pounds and took the trail north, bound for Puget Sound. We camped where night overtook us, sleeping in the open air without shelter or cover other than that afforded by some friendly tree with drooping limbs.

Our trail first led us along near the bank of the Columbia to the Cowlitz, thence up the latter river thirty miles or more, and then across the country nearly sixty miles to Olympia.

At this time there might have been about Puget Sound two thousand white people all told, while now there are nearer a million. There were fewer than four thousand inhabitants in all the territory within the boundaries of the present great state of Washington, and but eleven persons within the borders of the present city of Tacoma. These people were so scattered we did not realize there were even that number, for the Puget Sound country is a big place — more than two hundred miles long and seventy-five miles wide — between two mountain ranges, with the Cascades on the east and the

Olympics on the west. The waters of the Sound, including all the channels and bays and inlets and shores of forty islands, make more than sixteen hundred miles of shore line — nearly as many miles as the Oregon Trail is long; that is, almost as many miles as we had the previous year traversed from the Missouri River to the Sound.

Our expectations had been raised high by the glowing accounts of Puget Sound. But a feeling of deep disappointment fell upon us when we could see in the foreground only bare, dismal mud flats, and beyond these a channel scarcely twice as wide as that of the great river we had left, bounded on either side by high, heavily timbered land. We wished ourselves back at our cabin on the Columbia.

Should we turn around and go back? No; we had never done that since leaving our Indiana home. But what was the use of stopping here? We wanted a place to make a farm, and we could not make it on such forbidding land as this. The dense forest stretching out before us was interesting enough to the lumberman, and for aught I knew there were channels for the ships; but I wanted to be neither lumberman nor sailor. Our first camp on Puget Sound, near Olympia, was not cheerful.

Olympia at the time contained about one hundred inhabitants. It had three stores, a hotel, a livery stable, a saloon, and one weekly newspaper. A glance at the advertising columns of this paper, *The Columbian* (from the name which was expected to be that of the new territory), disclosed but a few local advertisers. "Everybody knows everybody

here," a resident remarked to me; "so what's the use of advertising?"

We could not stay at Olympia. We had pushed on past some good locations on the Chehalis, and farther south, without locating. Should we now retrace our steps? Oliver said no, and my better judgment also said no, though I was sorely pressed with a feeling of homesickness.

The decision was quickly made to see more of this Puget Sound. But how were we to see these, to us, unexplored waters? I declared that I would not go in one of those Indian canoes, that we should upset it before we were out half an hour. I had to admit that the Indians navigated the whole Sound in these canoes and were safe, but I would not trust myself in a craft that would tip as easily as a Siwash canoe. When I came to know the Indians better and saw their performances in these frail craft, my admiration for the canoes was even greater than my distrust had been.

Neither Oliver nor I had much experience in boating, and we had none in boat building. However, when we had discarded the idea of taking a canoe, we set to work with a hearty good will to build us a skiff. We made it out of light lumber, then easily obtained at Tumwater. We determined to have the skiff broad enough not to upset easily, and long enough to carry us and our light cargo of food and bedding.

As in the trip across the Plains, we must provide our own transportation. We were told that the Sound was a solitude so far as transportation facili-

ties were concerned. Here and there might be a vessel loading piles and square timber for the San Francisco market, but not a steamer was then plying on the Sound; there was not even a sailing craft that essayed to carry passengers.

I was but a few months past twenty-three, while my brother Oliver could claim nearly two years' seniority. We had always played together as boys, worked together as men, and lived together even after my marriage until the day of his death, now nearly sixty years ago, and so far as I can remember we never had a disagreement in our whole life. So, when we cast off the line at Olympia, on or about the twenty-eighth day of May, 1853, we were assured of one thing, and that was a concert of action, be there danger or only labor ahead.

One other thing we knew: we could endure sturdy labor without fatigue and improvised camp without discomfort, for we were used to just such experiences.

Poor innocent souls, though, we thought we could follow the shore line and thus avoid danger, and float with the tide and thus minimize labor and yet keep our bearings. We soon found out our mistake.

As the tide drew us off on the placid waters of the bay at Olympia, with just a breath of air stirring, our little eighteen-foot craft behaved splendidly. The slight ripples jostling against the bow made our venture seem like a pleasure trip, making amends for the tiresome pack across the country.

We floated lazily with the tide, sometimes taking a

few strokes with the oars, and at other times whistling for the wind. The little town of Olympia to the south became dimmed by distance. But we were no sooner fairly out of sight of the little village than the question came up which way to go. What channel should we take?

"Let the tide decide; that will carry us out toward the ocean."

"No, we are drifting into another bay; that cannot be where we want to go."

"Why, we are drifting right back almost in the same direction from which we came, but into another bay! We'll pull this way to that point to the northeast."

"But there seems a greater opening of water to the northwest."

"Yes, but I do not see any way out there."

So we talked and pulled and puzzled, until finally it dawned upon us that the tide had turned and we were being carried back into South Bay, to almost the very spot whence we had come.

"The best thing we can do is to camp," said Oliver.

I readily assented. So our first night's camp was scarcely twelve miles from where we had started in the morning. It was a fine camping place. A beautiful pebbly beach extended almost to the water's edge even at low tide. There was a grassy level spit, a background of evergreen giant-fir timber, and clear, cool water gushing out from the bank near by. And such fuel for the camp fire! — broken limbs with just enough pitch to make a cheerful

blaze and yet body enough to last well. We felt so happy that we were almost glad the journey had been interrupted.

Oliver was the carpenter of the party, the tent-builder, wood-getter, and general roustabout, while I, the junior, was "chief cook and bottle-washer."

An encampment of Indians being near, a party of them soon visited our camp and began making signs for trade.

"*Mika tik eh* ¹ clams?" said one of the matrons of the party.

"What does she say, Oliver?"

"I'm blessed if I know, but it looks as if she wanted to sell some clams."

After considerable dickering, with signs and gestures and words many times repeated, we were able to impart the information that we wanted a lesson in cookery. If she would show us how to cook the clams, we would buy some. This brought some merriment in the camp. The idea that there lived a person who did not know how to cook clams! Without saying by your leave or anything else, the motherly-looking native woman began tearing down our camp fire.

"Let her alone, and see what she's up to," said Oliver, noticing that I was disturbed at such interference with my well-laid plans for bread-baking.

She covered the hot pebbles and sand where the fire had been with a lighter layer of pebbles. Upon these the clams were deposited. They were covered with fine twigs, and upon the twigs earth was placed.

¹ You want.

"*Kloshe*," ¹ she said.

"*Hyas kloshe*," ² said her husband, who squatted near by, watching the proceedings with evident approval.

"What did they say?" I asked.

"I know what they said, but I don't know what they meant," responded Oliver, "unless it was she had done a good job; and I think she has."

Thus began and ended our first lesson in the Chinook jargon, and our first experience with a clam-bake.

This first clambake gave us great encouragement. We soon learned that the bivalves were to be found in almost unlimited quantity and were widely distributed. The harvest was ready twice a day, when the tide was out, and we need have no fear of a famine even if cast away in some unfrequented place.

"*Ya-ka kloshe al-ta*," ³ said the Indian woman, uncovering the steaming mass and placing the clams on a sliver found near by. "*De-late kloshe muck a muck alta*," ⁴

Without understanding her words, but knowing well what she meant, we fell to disposing of this, our first clam dinner. We divided with the Indians the bread that had been baked and some potatoes that had been boiled. The natives soon withdrew to their own camp.

Before retiring for the night, we repaid the visit. To see the little fellows of the camp scud behind

¹ Good.

² Very good.

³ Good now; ready to serve now.

⁴ Exceedingly good to eat.

their mother when the strangers entered, and shyly peep out from their retreat, while the mother lovingly reassured them with kind and affectionate caresses and finally coaxed them out from under cover, revealed something of the character of the natives that neither of us had realized before. We had been in Indian country for nearly a year, but with guns by our side, if not in our hands, during nearly half the time. We had not stopped to study the Indian character. We took it for granted that the Indians were our enemies and watched them suspiciously; but here seemed to be a disposition to be neighborly and helpful.

We took a lesson in Chinook, and by signs and words held conversation until a late hour. When we were ready to leave they gave us a slice of venison, enough for several meals. Upon offering to pay for it we were met with a shake of the head, and with the words, "*Wake, wake, kul-tus pot-latch,*" which we understood, with the help of their actions, to mean they made us a present of it.

We had made the Indians a present first, it is true; but we did not expect any return, except perhaps good will. From that time on during the trip — I may say, for all time since — I found the Indians of Puget Sound always ready to reciprocate acts of kindness. They hold in high esteem a favor granted if it is not accompanied by acts showing it to be designed simply to gain an advantage.



A fleet of Siwash canoes.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CRUISING ABOUT ON PUGET SOUND

OUR second day's cruise about the Sound took us past historic grounds. We went by old Fort Nesqually, one of the earliest posts of the Hudson's Bay Company on Puget Sound. Some houses had been built on the spot in 1829 or 1830, though the fort, one fourth of a mile back from the water, was not constructed until 1833, just twenty years before our visit.

As the tide and wind favored us, we did not stop. Soon we came in sight of a fleet of seven vessels lying at anchor in a large bay, several miles in extent. The sight of those seven vessels lying in the offing made a profound impression upon our minds. We had never before seen so many ships at one place. Curiously enough, among them was the good bark *Mary Melville*, with her gruff mate and big-hearted master, Captain Barston.

There were enough ships to keep busy every man who was willing to work and could swing an ax, drag a saw, or handle that instrument of torture, the goad stick. All this activity came from the shipment to the San Francisco market of piles, square timbers, cordwood, shingles, with small quantities of lumber — all that was obtainable, which was not very much. The descent of timber on the rollways sounded like distant thunder and could be heard at almost all hours of the day, even where the camps were not in sight but lay hidden up some secluded bay or inlet.

Upon the eastern slope of the shores of the bay lay the two towns, Port Steilacoom and Steilacoom City, both established in 1851. A far larger trade centered here than at any other point on Puget Sound, and we decided on a halt to make ourselves acquainted with the surroundings. A mile and a half from the shore we found also Fort Steilacoom. It was simply the camp of a company of United States soldiers, quartered in wooden shells of houses and log cabins.

Intense rivalry ran between the two towns, Upper and Lower Steilacoom, at this time. As a result things were booming. We were sorely tempted to accept the flattering offer of four dollars a day for common labor in a timber camp, but concluded not to be swerved from the search for a new home site.

During this visit we began seeing Indians in considerable numbers. They seemed to be a listless lot, with no thought for the future, or even for the immediate present. The Indians in those days

seemed to work or play by spurts and spells. Here and there we saw a family industriously pursuing some object; but as a class they seemed to me the laziest set of people on earth.

That opinion was materially modified later, as I became better acquainted with their habits. I have found just as industrious people, both men and women, among the Indians as among the whites. The workers, it may be said, are less numerous among the men; the women are all industrious.

Should we camp here and spy out the land, or should we go forward and see what lay before us? After a sober second thought, we realized that we had nothing to trade but labor; and we had not come as far as this to be laborers for hire. We had come to find a place to make a farm, and a farm we were going to have. Again we set about searching for claims; and the more we searched, the less we liked the look of things.

Finally, on the fourth day, after a long, wearisome tramp, we cast off at high tide, and in a dead calm, to continue our cruise. Oliver soon dropped into a comfortable afternoon nap, leaving me in full command. As the sun shone warm and the tide was taking us rapidly in the direction we wanted to go, why shouldn't I doze a little too, even if we did miss some of the sight-seeing?

I was aroused from my nap by Oliver's exclaiming, "What is that?" Then, half to himself, "As I live, it's a deer swimming out here in the bay!"

"It surely can't be," I responded, three-quarters asleep.

"That's what it is!" he asserted.

We were wide awake now and gave chase. Very soon we caught up with the animal and succeeded in throwing a rope over its horns. By this time we had drifted into the Narrows, and we soon found we had something more important to do than to tow a deer.

We were among the tide rips of the Sound. Turning the deer loose, we pulled our best for the shore, and found shelter in an eddy. A perpendicular bluff rose from the high-water mark, leaving no place for camp fire or bed.

The tide seemed to roll in waves and with contending forces of currents and counter currents, yet all moving in a general direction. It was our first introduction to a genuine tide rip. The waters boiled as if in a veritable caldron, swelling up here and there in centers and whirling with dizzy velocity. A flat-bottomed boat like our little skiff, we thought, could not stay afloat there very long.

Just then some Indian canoes came along, moving with the tide. We expected to see them swamped as they encountered the troubled waters; but to our astonishment they passed right through without taking a drop of water. Then there came two well-manned canoes creeping alongshore against the tide. I have said well-manned, but half the paddles, in fact, were wielded by women, and the post of honor, or that where most dexterity was required, was occupied by a woman.

"*Me-si-ka-kwass kopa s'kookum chuck?*"¹ said

¹ Are you afraid of the rapid water?

the maiden in the bow of the first canoe, as it drew alongside our boat, in which we were sitting.

Since our evening's experience at the clambake camp, we had been industriously studying the Chinook language, and we could understand that she was asking if we were afraid of the rough waters. We responded, partly in English and partly in Chinook, that we were, and besides that it was impossible for us to proceed against the strong current.

"*Ne-si-ka mit-lite*,"¹ she replied; that is to say, she told us that the Indians were going to camp with us and wait for the turn of the tide, and accordingly they landed near by.

By the time the tide had turned, night had come. We hardly knew whether to camp in our boat or to start out on unknown waters in the dark. Our Indian visitors made preparations to proceed on their journey, and assured us it was all right ahead. They offered to show us to good camping grounds in a big bay where the current was not strong and where we would find a great number of Indians in camp.

It did not occur to us to have any fear of the Indians. We did not feel secure because of our prowess or personal courage but because we thought that we were among friends. We had by this time come to know the general feeling existing between Indians and whites, and we knew there was no trouble between these two races, whatever there might be between individuals. I do not want any

¹ I will stay with you.



A deep-sea vessel sailing before the wind.

reader to imagine that we then thought, or that I now think, that we were doing a heroic act in following a strange party of Indians into unknown waters and into an unknown camp of natives after dark. There was no danger ahead of us other than that incident to the attempt of persons so inexperienced on the water to navigate such waters with a boat so frail and so unsuitable in shape.

Sure enough, a short pull with a favorable current brought us through the Narrows into Commencement Bay and in sight of numerous camp fires in the distance. Our Indian friends lazily paddled along in company, while we labored vigorously with our

oars, as we were by this time in a mood to find a camp where we could have a fire and prepare some food. I remember that camp quite vividly, though I cannot locate it exactly. I know only that it was on the water front within the present limits of the city of Tacoma. I can remember that a beautiful little rivulet came down a ravine and spread out on the beach and that the shore line was not precipitous and was a splendid camping ground.

I well remember our supper of fresh salmon. Of all the delicious fish known, give me the salmon caught by trolling in early summer in the deep waters of Puget Sound, the fish so fat that the excess of oil must be turned out of the pan while cooking. We had not then learned the art of cooking on the spit, or at least did not practice it. We had scarcely got our camp fire started before a salmon was offered us; I cannot recall what we paid, but I know it was not a high price, else we could not have purchased.

The following day we could see Mt. Rainier, with its reflection in the placid waters of the bay. Theodore Winthrop, the observant traveler who came into these same waters a few months later and wrote of it as Mt. Tacoma, described it as "a giant mountain dome of snow, seeming to fill the aërial spaces as the image displaced the blue deeps of tranquil water." A wondrous sight it was and is, whatever the name.

Next day we entered the mouth of the Puyallup River. We had not proceeded far up this stream before we were interrupted by a solid drift of monster trees and logs, extending from bank to bank up the river for a quarter of a mile or more. The Indians

told us that there were two other like obstructions a few miles farther up the river, and that the current was very strong.

We secured the services of an Indian and his canoe to help us up the river, and left our boat at the Indians' camp near the mouth. It took a tugging of two days to go six miles. We had to unload our outfit three times to pack it over cut-off trails, and drag our canoe around the drifts. It was a story of constant toil with consequent discouragement, not ending until we camped on the bank of the river within the present limits of the thriving little city of Puyallup.

The Puyallup valley at that time was a solitude. No white settlers were found, though it was known that two men had staked claims and had made some slight improvements. An Indian trail led up the river from Commencement Bay, and another led westward to the Nesqually plains. Over these pack animals could pass, but wagon roads there were none; and whether a feasible route for one could be found, only time and labor could determine.

We retraced our steps, and in the evening landed again at the mouth of the river after a severe day's toil. We were in no cheerful mood. Oliver did not sing as usual while preparing for camp. Neither did I have much to say; but I fell to work, mechanically preparing the much-needed meal. We ate in silence and then went to sleep.

We had crossed the two great states of Illinois and Iowa, over hundreds of miles of unoccupied prairie land as rich as anything that ever "lay out of doors,"



Asahel Curtis

Mt. Rainier.

on our way from Indiana to Oregon in search of land on which to make a home. Here, at what we might call the end of our rope, we had found the land, but with conditions that seemed almost too adverse to overcome.

It was a discouraging outlook, even if there had been roads. Such timber! It seemed an appalling undertaking to clear this land, the greater part of it being covered with a heavy growth of balm and alder trees and a thick tangle of underbrush besides. When we fell asleep that night, it was without visions of new-found wealth. And yet later I did tackle a quarter-section of that heaviest timber land, and never let up until the last tree, log, stump, and root had disappeared, though of course not all cleared off by my own hands.

If we could have known what was coming four months later, we would have remained, in spite of our discouragement, and searched the valley diligently for the choicest locations. For in October following there came the first immigrants over the Natchess Pass Trail into Washington. They located in a body over nearly the whole valley, and before the year was ended had made a rough wagon road out to the prairies and to Steilacoom, the county seat.

We lingered at the mouth of the river in doubt as to what was best to do. My thoughts went back to wife and baby in the lonely cabin on the Columbia River, and again to that bargain we had made before marriage, that we were going to be farmers. How could we be farmers if we did not have land? Under

the Donation Act we could hold three hundred and twenty acres, but we must live on it for four years; it behooved us to look out and secure our location before the act expired, which would occur the following year.

With misgivings and doubts, on the fourth day Oliver and I loaded our outfit into our skiff and floated out on the receding tide, whither, we did not know.

As we drew off from the mouth of the Puyallup River, numerous parties of Indians were in sight. Some were trolling for salmon, with a lone Indian in the bow of each canoe; others with poles were fishing for smelt; still others with nets seemed waiting for fisherman's luck.

Other parties were passing, those in each canoe singing a plaintive chant in minor key, accompanied by heavy strokes of the paddle handles against the sides of the canoe, as if to keep time. There were really some splendid female voices to be heard, as well as male, and though there were but slight variations in the sounds or words, they seemed never to tire in repeating, and, I must confess, we never tired of listening. Then, at times, a break in the singing would be followed by a hearty laugh, or perhaps a salutation would be given in a loud tone to some distant party, which would always bring a response; and with the resumption of the paddles, like the sound made by sailors with the block and fall, the song would be renewed, often to bring back a distant echo from a bold shore. These scenes were repeated time and again as we encountered the

natives in new fields that constantly opened up to our view.

During the afternoon, after we had traveled some twenty miles, we saw ahead of us larger waters, into which we entered, finding ourselves in a bay five or six miles wide, with no very certain prospect of a camping place. Just then we espied a cluster of cabins and houses on a point to the east. There we made a landing, at what is now known as Alki Point, though it then bore the pretentious name of New York.

We soon pushed on to the east shore, where the steam from a sawmill served as a guide, and landed at a point that cannot be far from the western limit of the present Pioneer Place, in Seattle, near where the totem pole now stands.

As we were not looking for a mill site or a town site, we pushed on next day. We had gone but a few miles when a favorable breeze sprang up, bringing with it visions of a happy time sailing; but behind us lay a long stretch of open waters several miles wide, and ahead we could see no visible shelter and no lessening of width; consequently the breeze was not entirely welcome. In a short time the breeze stiffened, and we began to realize that we were in danger. We were afraid to attempt a landing on the surf-beaten shore; but finally, the wind increasing, the clouds lowering, and the rain coming down in torrents, we had to take the risk. Letting down the sail, we headed our frail craft toward the shore. Fortune favored us, for we found a good sandy beach upon which to land, though we got a thorough drenching while so doing.

Here we were compelled to remain two or three days in a dismal camp, until the weather became more favorable. Then launching our boat, we pulled for the head of Whidbey's Island, a few miles to the northwest.

Now for the true fish story that I said back in Chapter One I had to tell! I have always been shy about telling it, lest some smart fellow should up and say I was drawing on my imagination. But I am not.

When we had broken camp and were sailing along, we heard a dull sound like that often heard from the tide rips. As we rested on our oars, we could see that there was a disturbance in the water and that it was moving toward us. It extended as far as we could see, in the direction we were going. The sound increased and became like the roar of a heavy fall of rain or hail on water, and we became aware that it was a vast school of fish moving south, while millions were seemingly dancing on the surface of the water or leaping in the air.

We could feel the fish striking against the boat in such vast numbers that they fairly moved it. The leap in the air was so high that we tried tipping the boat to catch some as they fell back, and sure enough, here and there one would drop into the boat. We soon discovered some Indians following the school. They quickly loaded their canoes by using barbed poles and throwing the impaled fish into their canoes. With an improvised net we, too, soon obtained all we wanted.

When we began to go on we were embarrassed by

the mass of fish moving in the water. As far as we could see there was no end to the school ahead of us; but we finally got clear of the moving mass and reached the island shore in safety, only to become weather-bound in the wilds once more.

This camp did not prove so dreary as the last one, although it was more exposed to the swell of the big waters and the sweep of the wind. To the north we had a view of thirty miles or more, to where horizon and water blended, leaving it doubtful whether land was in sight or not. As we afterward ascertained, we could see the famous San Juan Island, later the bone of contention between our government and Great Britain, when the northern boundary of the United States was settled.

Port Townsend lay some ten miles from our camp, but was shut out from view by an intervening headland. We did not know the exact location of the town. Like the lost hunters, "we knew where we were, but we didn't know where any place else was." Not lost ourselves, the world was lost from us.

Three ships passed us while we were at this camp, one coming from out of space, as it seemed, a mere speck, and growing to a full-fledged deep-sea vessel, with all sails set, scudding before the wind. The other two were gracefully beating their way out against the stiff breeze to the open waters beyond. What prettier sight is there than a full-rigged vessel with all sails spread! The enthusiasm that rose as we gazed at the ships, coupled with a spirit of adventure, prompted us to go farther.

It was a calm, beautiful day when we reached Port Townsend. Distance lends enchantment, the old adage says; but in this case the nearer we approached to the place, the greater our admiration. The shining, pebbly beach in front, the clear, level spot adjoining, with the beautiful open and comparatively level plateau in the background, and two or three vessels at anchor in the foreground, made a picture of a perfect city site.

Upon closer examination of the little town we found that the first impression, gained from a distance, was illusory. Many shacks and camps, at first mistaken for the white men's houses, were found to be occupied by natives. They were a drunken, rascally rabble, spending their gains from the sale of fish and oil in debauches that would last as long as their money held out.

This seemed to be a more stalwart race of Indians than those to the south, doubtless from the buffeting they often received in the larger waters. They would go out even to the open sea on their fishing excursions in canoes manned by thirty men or more.

After spending two or three days exploring the country, we turned back to the bay where lay the seven ships we had seen near Steilacoom. We remembered the timber camps, the bustle and stir of the little new village, and the activity that we saw there, greater than anywhere else on the waters of the Sound. Most of all, my thoughts would go on to the little cabin on the Columbia River.

Three days sufficed to land us back in the bay we sought, but the ships were gone. Not a sailing craft

of any kind was in sight of the little town, though the building activity was going on as before.

The memory of those ships, however, remained with us and determined our minds on the important question where the trade center was to be. We decided therefore that our new home should be near Steilacoom, and we finally staked out a claim on an island not far from that place.

Once the claim had been decided upon, my next desire naturally was to get home to my family. The expedition had taken thirty days, and of course there had been no news from my wife, nor had I been able to send back any word to her.

I look back with amazement at the rash undertaking of that trip. So ill-equipped and inexperienced we were, I wonder that we escaped with no more serious mishap than we had. We were not justified in taking these chances, or at least I was not, with my wife and baby left in the cabin on the bank of the Columbia River, but we did not realize the danger until we were in it, and hence did not share in the suspense and uneasiness of that one left behind. Upon the whole it was a most enjoyable trip for Oliver and me.



On the trail again with Buck and Dandy.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MOVING FROM THE COLUMBIA TO PUGET SOUND

“CAN I get home tonight?” I asked myself.

It was an afternoon of the last week of June, in 1853, and the sun was yet high. I was well up the left bank of the Cowlitz River; how far I could not tell, for there were no milestones on the crooked, half-obstructed trail leading downstream. At best it would be a race with the sun, but the days were long, and the twilight was long, and I would camp that much nearer home if I made haste.

My pack had been discarded on the Sound. I had neither coat nor blanket. I wore a heavy woolen shirt, a slouch hat, and worn shoes; both hat and shoes gave ample ventilation. Socks I had none; neither had I suspenders, an improvised belt taking their place. I was dressed for the race and was eager for the trial. At Olympia I had parted with my brother, who had returned to stay at the

claims we had taken, while I was to go home for the wife and baby, to remove them to our new home.

I did not particularly mind the camping, but I did not fancy the idea of lying out so near home if by extra exertion I could reach the cabin before night. There was no friendly ox to snug up to for warmth, as in so many of the bivouacs on the Plains; but I had matches, and there were many mossy places for a bed under the friendly shelter of drooping cedars. We never thought of catching cold from lying on the ground or on cedar boughs, or from getting a good drenching.

After all, the cabin could not be reached, as the trail could not be followed at night. Slackening pace at nightfall to cool my system gradually, I finally made my camp and slept as soundly as if on a bed of down. My consolation was that the night was short and I could see to travel by three o'clock.

I do not look upon those years of camp and cabin life as years of hardship. To be sure, our food was plain as well as our dress; our hours of labor were long and the labor itself was frequently severe; the pioneers appeared rough and uncouth. Yet underlying all this there ran a vein of good cheer, of hopefulness. We never watched for the sun to go down, or for the seven o'clock whistle, or for the boss to quicken our steps. The days were always too short, and interest in our work was always unabated.

The cabin could not be seen until the trail came quite near it. When I caught sight of a curl of smoke, I knew I was almost there. Then I saw the

cabin and a little lady in almost-bloomer dress milking the cow; and there was a fat little calf in the pen, born since I had left home. The lady never finished milking that cow, nor did she ever milk any cow when her husband was at home, though she knew how well enough and never felt above such work if a necessity arose; but we parceled out duties on a different basis, with both to our suited parts. The bloom on the cheek of my wife, the baby in the cabin as fat as the calf, told the story of good health and plenitude of food and brought good cheer with the welcome home.

Although it was then the first week of July, the dried potato eyes had just been planted, but they were already sprouting vigorously. We had had to wait for the waters of the June freshet to recede. From these there came a crop of nearly four hundred bushels at harvest time.

There were so many things to talk about that we could scarcely tell where to begin or when to stop. Much of the conversation naturally centered on the question of our moving to a new home.

"Why, at Olympia, eggs were a dollar a dozen. I saw them selling at that. The butter you have there would bring you a dollar a pound as fast as you could weigh it out. I saw stuff they called butter sell for that. Potatoes are selling for three dollars a bushel and onions at four. Everything the farmer raises sells high."

"Who buys?"

"Oh, almost everybody has to buy. There are ships and timber camps and the hotels, and —"

"Where do they get the money?"

"Everybody seems to have money. Some take it there with them. Men working in the timber camps get four dollars a day and their board. At one place they paid four dollars a cord for wood to ship to San Francisco, and a man can sell all the shingles he can make at four dollars a thousand. I was offered five cents a foot for piles. If we had Buck and Dandy over there, we could make twenty dollars a day putting in piles."

"Where could you get the piles?"

"Off the government land, of course. All help themselves to what they want. Then there are the fish and the clams and oysters, and —"

"But what about the land for the claim?"

That question was a stumper. The little wife never lost sight of that bargain made before we were married. Now I found myself praising a country for the agricultural qualities of which I could not say much. But if we could sell produce higher, might we not well lower our standard of an ideal farm? The claim I had taken was described with a touch of apology, in quality falling far below what we had hoped to acquire. However, we decided to move, and began to prepare for the journey.

The wife, baby, bedding, ox yoke, and log chain were sent up the Cowlitz in a canoe. Buck and Dandy and I took the trail. On this occasion I was ill prepared for a cool night camp, having neither blanket nor coat. I had expected to reach Hard Bread's Hotel, where the people in the canoe would stop overnight. But I could not make it, so again

I lay out on the trail. "Hard Bread's," an odd name for a hotel, was so called because the old widower that kept the place fed his patrons on hardtack three times a day.

I found that my wife had not fared any better in the hotel than I had on the trail — in fact, not so well. The floor of the cabin — the hotel — was a great deal harder than the sand spit where I had passed the night. I had plenty of pure, fresh air, while she, in a closed cabin and in the same room with many others, had neither fresh air nor freedom from creeping things that make life miserable. With her shoes for a pillow, a shawl for covering, small wonder that she reported, "I did not sleep a wink last night."

We soon arrived at the Cowlitz landing, the end of the canoe journey. Striking the tent that had served us so well on the Plains and making a cheerful camp fire, we speedily forgot the hard experiences of the trail.

Fifty miles more of travel lay before us. And such a road! However, we had one consolation — it would be worse in winter than at that time.

Our wagon had been left at The Dalles and we had never seen or heard of it again. Our cows were gone — given for provender to save the lives of the oxen during the deep December snow. So when we took account of stock, we had the baby, Buck and Dandy, a tent, an ox yoke and chain, enough clothing and bedding to keep us comfortable, a very little food, and no money. The money had all been expended on the canoe passage.

Should we pack the oxen and walk, and carry the baby, or should we build a sled and drag our things over to the Sound, or should I make an effort to get a wagon? This last proposition was the most attractive, and so next morning, driving my oxen before me and leaving wife and baby to take care of the camp, I began the search for a wagon.

That great-hearted pioneer, John R. Jackson, did not hesitate a moment, stranger though I was, to say, "Yes, you can have two if you need them."

Jackson had settled there eight years before, ten miles out from the landing, and now had an abundance around him. Like all the earlier pioneers, he took a pride in helping others who came later. He would not listen to our proceeding any farther before the next day. He insisted on entertaining us in his comfortable cabin, and sent us on our way in the morning, rejoicing in plenty.

Without special incident we in due time arrived at the falls of the Deschutes (Tumwater) and on the shore of Puget Sound. Here a camp must be established again. The wife and baby were left there while I drove the wagon back over the tedious road to Jackson's and then returned with the oxen to tidewater, where I was at last going to part with them for good and all. I could not transport them to our island home, nor provide for them there.

My feelings may well be imagined when, upon returning to the place where I had left my family camped, I found wife, baby, and tent all gone. I knew that smallpox was raging among the Indians, and that a camp where it was prevalent was less than

a quarter of a mile away. The dread disease had terrors then that it does not now possess. Could it be possible my wife or baby had been taken sick and had been removed?

The question was soon solved. It appeared that I had scarcely got out of sight on my trip back with the oxen before one of those royal pioneer matrons had come to the camp. She pleaded and insisted, and finally almost frightened the little wife into going with her and sharing her house, which was near by but out of danger from the smallpox. God bless those earlier pioneers! They were all good to us, sometimes to the point of embarrassment, in their generous hospitality all along our journey from the Columbia River up to Puget Sound.

Once my wife and little son were located, a small canoe was soon chartered and a few miles' vigorous paddling brought us to McNeil Island, opposite the town of Steilacoom, where we expected to find our second cabin, my brother, and the boat. No cabin, no brother, no boat, were to be seen. A raft of cabin logs floating in the lagoon near by was the only thing changed since I had left the place for my return trip to the Columbia River. I was sorely puzzled as to what to do.

My brother was to have had the cabin ready by the time I returned. He not only had not done that, but he had taken the boat and had left no sign to tell us where either brother or boat could be found. Not knowing what else to do, I paddled over to the town of Steilacoom. There I found out where the boat and the provisions had been left, and after

an earnest parley succeeded in getting possession. With my canoe in tow I soon made my way back to where my little flock was, and speedily transferred all to the spot that was to be our island dwelling. We set up our tent, and felt at home once more.



Steilacoom, three miles across the bay, had grown during my absence, and in the distance it looked like a city in fact as well as in name. Mt. Rainier looked bigger and taller than ever. Even the songs of the Indians sounded better; the canoes looked more graceful, and the paddles seemed to be wielded more expertly. Everything looked cheerful; everything interested us, especially the crows, with their trick of breaking clams by rising in the air and dropping them on the boulders. There were so many new things to observe that for a time we almost forgot that we were nearly out of provisions and money and did not know what had happened to Oliver.

Next morning Oliver returned to the village. Finding that the boat and provisions had been taken and seeing smoke coming from the island, he surmised what had happened and came paddling across to the tent. He had been



Crows breaking clams by dropping them on boulders.



A cat-and-clay chimney, made of small split sticks embedded in layers of clay mortar.

made a tempting offer to help load a ship and had just completed his contract. As a result of this work, he was able to exhibit a slug¹ of California gold and other money that looked precious indeed in our eyes.

The building of our second cabin with its stone fireplace, cat-and-clay chimney, lumber floor, real window with glass in it, together with

the high-post bedstead made out of tapering cedar saplings, the table fastened to the wall, the rustic chairs, seemed but like a play spell. No eight-hour day there — eighteen would be nearer the mark; we never tired.

It was in this same year, 1853, that Congress cut off from Oregon the region that now comprises the state of Washington and all of Idaho north of the Snake River. The new district was called Washington Territory, so we who had moved out to the Oregon country found ourselves living in Washington.

¹ A slug was a rectangular gold coin worth about fifty dollars.



Bobby carried me safely over more than sixty crossings.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MESSAGES AND MESSENGERS

At last we were really settled and could begin the business for which we had come West; henceforth the quiet life of the farmer was to be ours, we thought. But again we had not reckoned with the unexpected.

While we were working on our new cabin, we received a letter from father, saying: "Boys, if Oliver will come back to cross with us, we will go to Oregon next year." The letter was nearly three months old when we received it.

Our answer was immediate: "Oliver will be with you next spring."

Then came the question of money. Would Davenport, who had bought the Columbia River claims, pay in the fall? Could he? We decided that we must go to the timber camp to earn the money to pay the expenses of Oliver's journey, that we must not depend altogether on the Columbia River asset.

"What shall we do with the things?" asked my wife.

"Lock them up in the cabin," suggested Oliver.

"And you go and stay with the Dofflemires," I added.

"Not I," she returned. "I'm going along to cook."

All our well-laid plans were thus suddenly changed. Our clearing of the land was deferred; the chicken house, the inmates of which were to make us rich, was not built; the pigs were not bought to fatten on the clams; and many other pet schemes were dropped that Oliver might go back East to bring father and mother across the Plains.

We struck awkward but rapid and heavy strokes in the timber camp established on the bluff overlooking the falls at Tumwater. The little cook supplied the huckleberry pudding for dinner, with plenty of the lightest, whitest bread, and vegetables, meat, and fish served in style good enough for kings. Such appetites! No coaxing was required to get us to eat a hearty meal. Such sound sleep, such satisfaction! Talk about hardships — it was all pleasure as we counted the eleven dollars a day that the Tullis brothers paid us for cutting logs, at one dollar and seventy cents a thousand. We earned this every day. Yes, we should be able to make money enough together to pay Oliver's passage to Iowa.

It was to be a long journey — over to the Columbia River, out from there by steamer to San Francisco, then to the Isthmus, then to New York.

After that, by rail as far west as there was a railroad, then on foot to Eddyville, Iowa, where the start was again to be made. It would take Oliver two months to reach Eddyville, and then at least seven more to lead the newcomers over the trail from Iowa to Puget Sound.

By January Oliver was speeding on his way, and again my wife and I were left without money and with but a scant supply of provisions. How we made out through the winter I can hardly remember, but we managed somehow and kept well and happy. Soon after Oliver's departure our second baby was born.

In the latter part of August, 1854, eight months after Oliver had left us, James K. Hurd, of Olympia, sent me word that he had been out on the immigrant trail and had heard that some of my relatives were on the road, but that they were belated and short of provisions. He advised me to go to their assistance, to make sure of their coming directly over the Cascade Mountains and not down the Columbia River.

How my people, with Oliver's experience to guide them, should be in the condition described was past my comprehension. However, I accepted the statement as true. I felt the particular importance of their having certain knowledge as to prevailing conditions of an over-mountain trip through the Natchess Pass. The immigrants of the previous year had encountered formidable difficulties in the mountains, narrowly escaping the loss of everything, if not facing actual starvation. I could not help

feeling that possibly the same conditions still prevailed. The only way to determine the question was to go and see for myself, to meet my father's party and pilot them through the pass.

But how could I go and leave wife and two babies on our island home? The summer had been spent in clearing land and planting crops, and my money was very low. To remove my family would cost something in cash, besides the abandonment of the season's work to almost certain destruction. Without a moment's hesitation my wife said to go; she and Mrs. Darrow, who was with us as nurse and companion, would stay right where they were until I got back.

I was not so confident of the outcome as she. At best the trip was hazardous, even when undertaken well prepared and with company. As far as I could see, I might have to go on foot and pack my food and blanket on my back. I knew that I should have to go alone. Some work had been done on the road during the summer, but I was unable to learn definitely whether any camps were yet in the mountains.

At Steilacoom there was a certain character, a doctor, then understood by few, and I may say not by many even to the end. Yet, somehow, I had implicit confidence in him, though between him and me there would seem to have been a gulf that could not be closed. Our habits of life were diametrically opposite. I would never touch a drop, while the doctor was always drinking — never sober, neither ever drunk.

It was to this man that I entrusted the safe-keeping of my little family. I knew my wife had such an aversion to people of his kind that I did not even tell her with whom I would arrange to look out for her welfare, but suggested another person to whom she might apply in case of need.

When I spoke to the doctor about what I wanted, he seemed pleased to be able to do a kind act. To reassure me, he got out his field glasses and turned them on the cabin across the water, three miles distant. Looking through them intently for a moment he said, "I can see everything going on over there. You need have no uneasiness about your folks while you are gone."

And I did not need to have any concern. Twice a week during all the time I was away an Indian woman visited the cabin on the island, always with some little presents. She would ask about the babies and whether there was anything needed. Then with the parting "*Alki nika keelapie*,"¹ she would leave.

With a fifty-pound flour sack filled with hard bread, or navy



Twice a week the Indian woman visited the cabin.

¹ By and by I will return.

biscuit, a small piece of dried venison, a couple of pounds of cheese, a tin cup, and a light blanket, all made into a pack of less than forty pounds, I climbed the hill of Steilacoom and took the road leading to Puyallup. The first night was spent with Jonathan McCarty, whose cabin was near where the town of Sumner now stands.

McCarty said: "You can't cross the streams on foot; I'll let you have a pony. He's small, but sure-footed and hardy, and he'll carry you across the rivers." He also said: "Tell your folks this is the greatest grass country on earth. Why, I am sure I harvested five tons of timothy to the acre this year."

The next day found me on the road with my blanket under the saddle, my sack of hard bread strapped on behind. I would mount to ride over level stretches of the road, or across streams, of which I had fully sixty crossings to make.

White River on the upper reaches is a roaring torrent; the rush of waters can be heard for a mile or more from the high bluff overlooking the narrow valley. The river is not fordable except in low water, and then in but few places. The river bed is full of stones worn round and smooth and slippery, from the size of a man's head to large boulders, thus making footing uncertain. After my first experience, I dreaded the crossings to come more than all else on the trip, for a misstep of the pony's might be fatal.

The little fellow, Bobby, seemed to be equal to the occasion. If the footing became too uncertain, he would stop stock-still and pound the water with one foot, then reach out carefully until he could find

secure footing, and finally move up a step or two. The water of the river is so charged with sediment that the bottom cannot be seen; hence the necessity of feeling the way. I soon learned that my pony could be trusted on the fords better than I. Thereafter I held only a supporting, not a guiding, rein and he carried me safely over all the crossings.

Allan Porter lived near the first crossing. As he was the last settler I should see and his the last place where I could get feed for my pony, other than grass or browse, I put up for the night under his roof.

He said I was going on a "Tom Fool's errand," for my people could take care of themselves, and he tried to dissuade me from proceeding on my journey. But I would not be turned back. The following morning I cut loose from the settlements and plunged into the deep forest of the mountains.

The road, if it could be called a road, lay in the narrow valley of White River or on the mountains adjacent. In some places, as at Mud Mountain, it reached more than a thousand feet above the river bed. There were stretches where the forest was so dense that one could scarcely see to read at midday, while elsewhere large burned areas gave an opening for daylight.

During the forenoon of this day, in one of those deepest of deep forests, Bobby stopped short, his ears pricked up. Just then I caught an indistinct sight of a movement ahead, and thought I heard voices; the pony made an effort to turn and bolt in the opposite direction. Soon there appeared three women and eight children on foot, coming down the

road in complete ignorance of the presence of anyone but themselves in the forest.

"Why, stranger! Where on earth did you come from? Where are you going, and what are you here for?" asked the foremost woman of the party.

Mutual explanations followed. I learned that their teams had become exhausted and all the wagons but one had been abandoned, and that this one was on the road a few miles behind. They were entirely out of provisions and had had nothing to eat for twenty hours except what natural food they had gathered, and that was not much. They eagerly inquired the distance to food, which I thought they might possibly reach that night. Meanwhile I had opened my sack of hard bread and had given each a cracker, at the eating of which the sound resembled pigs cracking dry, hard corn.

Neither they nor I had time to parley long. The women with their children, barefoot and ragged, bareheaded and unkempt, started down the mountain, intent on reaching food, while I went up the road wondering how often this scene was to be repeated as I advanced on my journey.

A dozen biscuits of bread is usually a very small matter, but with me it might mean a great deal. When could I find out how far I should have to go? What would be the plight of my people when found? Or should I find them at all? Might they not pass by and be on the way down the Columbia River before I could reach the main immigrant trail? These and kindred questions weighed on my mind as I slowly ascended the mountain.



The boy led his mother across the log.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BLAZING THE WAY THROUGH NATCHESS PASS

THE Natchess Pass Trail, along which I must make my way, had been blazed by a party of intrepid pioneers during the summer of 1853. Fifteen thousand dollars had been appropriated by Congress to be expended for a military road through the pass. In addition to this appropriation, both money and labor had been contributed by the settlers to open up a road for the emigrants who they knew were on the way. I saw some of the work, but do not remember seeing any of the men who were improving the road.

I stuck close to the old trail, making my first camp alone, just west of the summit. I had reached an altitude where the night chill was keenly felt, and with only my light blanket missed the friendly contact of the faithful ox that had served me so well on the Plains. My pony had nothing but browse for

supper, and he was restless. Nevertheless I slept soundly and was up early, refreshed and ready to resume the journey.

Such a road as I found is difficult to imagine. How the pioneer trail-blazers had made their way over it is a marvel. It seemed incredible that forests so tall and so dense could have existed anywhere on earth. Curiously enough, the heavier the standing timber, the easier it had been to slip through with wagons, there being but little undecayed timber or down timber. In the ancient days, however, great giants had been uprooted, lifting considerable earth with the upturned roots. As time went on, the roots decayed, making mounds two, three, or four feet high and leaving a corresponding hollow into which one would plunge; for the whole was covered by a dense, short evergreen growth that completely hid from view the unevenness of the ground. Over these hillocks and hollows and over great roots on top of the ground, they had rolled their wagons.

All sorts of devices had been tried to overcome obstructions. In many places, where the roots were not too large, cuts had been taken out. In other places the large timber had been bridged by piling up smaller logs, rotten chunks, brush, or earth, so that the wheels of the wagon could be rolled over the body of the tree. Usually three notches would be cut on the top of the log, two for the wheels and one for the reach, or coupling pole, to pass through.

In such places the oxen would be taken to the opposite side, and a chain or rope would be run to the end



By the aid of one short rope and the strips of the hides of three steers, twenty-nine wagons were lowered down the mountain side.

of the wagon tongue. One man drove, one or two guided the tongue, others helped at the wheels. In this way, with infinite labor and great care, the wagons would gradually be worked over all obstacles and down the mountain in the direction of the settlements.

But the more numerous the difficulties, the more

determined I became to push through at all hazards, for the greater was the necessity of acquainting myself with the obstacles to be encountered and of reaching my people to encourage and help them.

Before me lay the pass across the summit of the great Cascade Range, five thousand feet above sea level. This pass, which is about twenty miles north of Mt. Rainier, is known as the Natchess Pass. It extends through a small stretch of picturesque open country known as Summit Prairie.

In this prairie, during the autumn of 1853, a camp of immigrants had encountered grave difficulties. A short way out from the camp a steep mountain declivity lay squarely across their track. One of the women of the party exclaimed, when she first saw it, "Have we come to the jumping-off place at last?" They could not go back; they must either go ahead or starve in the mountains.

Stout hearts in the party were not to be deterred from making the effort to proceed. Go around this hill they could not. Go down it with logs trailed to the wagons, as they had done at other places, they dared not, for the hill was so steep the logs would go end over end and would be a danger instead of a help. The rope they had was run down the hill and turned out to be too short to reach the bottom.

James Biles, one of the leaders, commanded, "Kill a steer." They killed a steer, cut his hide into strips, and spliced the strips to the rope. It was found to be still too short to reach to the bottom.

The order went out: "Kill two more steers!" And two more steers were killed, their hides cut into

strips and the strips spliced to the rope, which then reached to the bottom of the hill.

By the aid of that rope and the strips of the hides of those three steers, twenty-nine wagons were lowered down the mountain side to the bottom of the steep hill. Only one broke away; it crashed down the mountain and was smashed into splinters.

The feat of bringing that train of wagons in, with the loss of only one out of twenty-nine, is the greatest I ever knew or heard of in the way of pioneer travel.

Nor were the trials ended when the wagons had been brought down to the bottom of that hill. With snail-like movements, the cattle and men becoming weaker and weaker, the train crept along, making less progress each day, until finally it seemed that the oxen could do no more. It became necessary to send them forward on the trail ten miles to a place where there was plenty of grass. Here, too, food for the travelers could be obtained. So the men worked desperately to make ten miles of passable road for the wagons, and finished just as the last particle of food was gone. On the third day after the oxen had been sent on ahead, they were brought back and the trip to Connell's Prairie was made before dark.

In the struggle over that ten miles the women and children had largely to take care of themselves while the men tugged at the wagons. One mother and her children, a ten-year old boy, a child of four years, and a babe of eight months, in some way were left behind when the others crossed a river.

A large fallen tree reached across the river, but the top on the farther side lay so close to the water that a

constant trembling and swaying made it a dangerous bridge to cross on. None of the four had eaten anything since the day before, and but a scant supply then; but the boy resolutely shouldered the four-year-old child and deposited him safely on the other side. Then came the little tot, the baby, to be carried across in his arms. Last came the mother.

"I can't go!" she exclaimed. "It makes me so dizzy!"

"Put one hand over your eyes, mother, and take hold of me with the other," said the boy. They began to move out sidewise on the log, half a step at a time.

"Hold steady, mother; we are nearly over."

"Oh, I am gone!" she cried, as she lost her balance and fell into the river. Happily, they were so near the farther bank that the little boy was able to catch with one hand a branch that hung over the bank while he held on to his mother with the other hand, and so she was saved.

It was then nearly dark, and without knowing how far it was to camp, the little party started on the road, tarrying on the bank of the river only long enough for the mother to wring the water out of her skirts. The boy carried the baby, while the four-year-old child walked beside his mother. After nearly two miles of travel and the ascent of a very steep hill, they caught the glimmer of camp lights; the mother fell, utterly prostrated.

The boy hurried his two little brothers into camp, calling for help to rescue his mother. The appeal

was promptly responded to; she was carried into camp and tenderly cared for until she revived.

There were one hundred and twenty-eight people in that train. Among them, as a boy, was George Himes, who for many years has been secretary of the Oregon Historical Society. To him we are indebted for most of this story of pioneer heroism.



Crossing the Blue Mountains.



Bobby and I went up the mountain in a zigzag course.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CLIMBING THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS

UP through the Natchess Pass Bobby and I took our lonely way, to reach and bring over this same difficult trail the party in which were my parents and my brothers and sisters.

From the first chill October night, following the sweat due to the climb of the day before, my muscles were a bit stiffened; but I was ready for the climb to the summit. Bobby was of a different mind. As I have said, he had been restless during the night. I had just strapped the roll of blankets and hard bread securely behind the saddle, when he suddenly turned his face homeward and trotted off gayly down the mountain.

I could do nothing but follow him. The narrow cut of the road and impenetrable obstructions on either side prevented my heading off his rascally maneuvers. Finally, on finding a nip of grass by

the roadside, he slackened his gait, and after several futile attempts I managed to get a firm hold of his tail. After this we went down the mountain together, much more rapidly than we had come up the evening before.

Bobby forgot to use his heels, else he might for a longer time have been master of the situation. The fact was he did not want to hurt me, but was determined to go no farther into mountains where he could not get a supper. The contest was finally settled in my favor when I managed to catch hold of the rein. Did I chastise him? Not a bit. I did not blame him; we were partners, but it was a one-sided partnership, as he had no interest in the enterprise other than to get enough to eat as we went along, and when he saw no prospect of food, he rebelled.

We were soon back past our camping ground of the night before, and on our way up the mountain. Bobby would not be led; if I tried to lead him, he would hold back for a while, then, making a rush up the steep ascent, he would be on my heels or toes before I could get out of the way. I would seize his tail with a firm grasp and follow. When he moved rapidly, I was helped up the mountain. When he slackened his pace, then came the resting spell. The engineering instinct of the horse tells him how to reduce grades by angles, and Bobby led me up the mountains in zigzag courses, I following always with the firm grasp of the tail that meant we would not part company, and we did not.

By noon we had surmounted all obstacles and stood

upon the summit prairie — one of them, for there are several. Here Bobby feasted to his heart's content, while for me it was the same old story — hard-tack and cheese, with a small allotment of dried venison.

To the south, apparently but a few miles distant, the old mountain, Rainier, loomed up into the clouds fully ten thousand feet higher than where I stood, a grand scene to behold, worthy of all the effort expended to reach this point. But I was not attuned to view with ecstasy the grandeur of what lay before me; rather I scanned the horizon to ascertain, if I could, what the morrow might bring forth.

This mountain served the pioneer as a huge barometer to forecast the weather. "How is the mountain this morning?" the farmer asked in harvest time. "Has the mountain got his nightcap on?" the housewife inquired before her wash was hung on the line. The Indian would watch the mountain with intent to determine whether he might expect *snass* (rain), or *kull snass* (hail), or *t'kope snass* (snow), and seldom failed in his conclusions. So that day I scanned the mountain top, partially hid in the clouds, with forebodings verified at nightfall.

A light snow came on just before night, which, with the high mountains on either side of the river, spread darkness rapidly. I was loath to camp. If I could safely have found my way, I would have traveled all night. The trail in places was very indistinct and the canyon was but a few hundred yards wide, with the tortuous river striking first one bluff and then the other, making numerous crossings necessary.

Finally I saw that I must camp. I crossed the river to an opening where the bear tracks were so thick that the spot seemed a playground for all these animals roundabout. The black bears on the western slope were timid and not dangerous; but I did not know about this species of the eastern slope.

I found two good-sized trees that had fallen obliquely across each other. With my pony tethered as a sentinel, and my fire as an advance post, I went to bed, nearly supperless. I felt lonesome; but I kept my fire burning all night, and I slept soundly.

Early next morning found Bobby and me on the trail. We were a little chilled by the cold mountain air and very willing to travel. Toward nightfall I heard the welcome tinkling of a bell, and soon saw first the smoke of camp fires, and then a village of tents and grime-covered wagons. How I tugged at Bobby's halter to make him go faster and then mounted him, without getting much more speed, can better be imagined than told.

Could it be the camp I was searching for? It had about the number of wagons and tents that I expected to meet. No; I was doomed to disappointment. Yet I rejoiced to find someone to camp with and talk to other than the pony.

The greeting given me by those tired and almost discouraged travelers could not have been more cordial had they been my relatives. They had been toiling for nearly five months on the road across the Plains, and now there loomed up before them this great mountain range to cross. Could they do it? If they could not get over with their wagons, could



Mountain wolves.

they get the women and children through safely? I was able to lift a load of doubt and fear from their jaded minds.

Before I knew what was happening, I caught the fragrance of boiling coffee and fresh meat cooking. The good matrons knew without being told that I was

hungry and had set to work to prepare me a meal, a sumptuous meal at that, taking into account the whetted appetite incident to a diet of hard bread straight, and not much of that either, for two days.

We had met on the Yakima River, at the place where the old trail crosses that river near the site of the present flourishing city of North Yakima.

In this party were some of the people who next year lost their lives in the White River massacre. They were Harvey H. Jones, his wife and three children, and George E. King, his wife and one child. One of the little boys of the camp, John I. King, lived to write a graphic account of the tragedy in which his mother and stepfather and their neighbors lost their lives. Another boy, a five-year-old child, was taken off, and after being held captive for nearly four months was then safely delivered over by the Indians to the military authorities at Fort Steilacoom.

I never think of those people but with sadness. Their struggle, doubtless the supreme effort of their

lives, was only to go to their death. I had pointed out to them where to go to get good claims, and they had lost no time, but had gone straight to the locality recommended and had set immediately to work preparing shelter for the winter.

"Are you going out on those plains alone?" Mrs. Jones asked me anxiously.

When I told her that I would have the pony with me, she insisted, "Well, I don't think it is safe."

Mr. Jones explained that his wife was thinking of the danger from the ravenous wolves that infested the open country. The party had lost weakened stock from their forages right close to the camp. He advised me not to camp near the watering places, but to go up on the high ridge. I followed his advice with the result, as we shall see, of missing my road and losing considerable time, which meant not a little trouble and anxiety.





To dig under was the only way to pass the obstruction.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FINDING MY PEOPLE

ON leaving my newly-found friends I faced a discouraging prospect. The start for the high, arid table-lands bordering the Yakima valley cut me loose from all communication. No more immigrants were met until I reached the main-traveled route beyond the Columbia River.

The road lay through a forbidding sage plain, or rather an undulating country, covered by shifting sands and dead grass of comparatively scant growth. As the sun rose, the heat became intolerable. The dust, in places, brought vivid memories of the trip across the Plains.

Strive against it as I might, my eyes would strain at the horizon to catch a glimpse of the expected train. Then an intolerable thirst seized upon me and compelled me to leave the road and descend into the valley for water.

I dared not linger off the trail and take chances of missing the expected train. So I went through another stretch of travel, of heat, and of thirst, that lasted until during the afternoon, when I found water on the trail. Tethering my pony for his much-needed dinner, I opened my sack of hard bread to count the contents; my store was half gone. I lay down in the shade of a small tree near the spring to take an afternoon nap. Rousing before sundown, refreshed, Bobby and I took the trail with new courage.

When night came, I could not find it in my heart to camp. The cool of the evening invigorated the pony, and we pushed on. Finding that the road could be followed, though but dimly seen, I kept on the trail until a late hour, when I unsaddled and hobbled the pony. The saddle blanket was brought into use, and I was soon off in dreamland, forgetting all about the dust, the trail, or the morrow.

In the morning I awoke to find that the pony had wandered far off on the hillside, so far, in fact, that it required close scanning to discover him. To make matters worse, his hobbles had become loosened, giving him free use of all his feet, and he was in no mood to take



Hobbling the pony.

the trail again. Coaxing was of no avail; driving would do no good. Taking an opportunity to seize his tail, I followed him around about over the plain and through the sagebrush at a rapid gait; finally he slackened pace and I again became master.

For the life of me I could not be sure of the direction of the trail after all this roaming over the plain at Bobby's heels, but I happened to take the right course. When the trail was found, there was the saddle to look for, and this was located with some difficulty.

The sun was high when we started on our journey. A few hundred yards of travel brought uneasiness, as it was evident that we were not on the regular trail. Not knowing but this was some cut-off, I went on until the Columbia River bluff was reached and the great river was in sight, half a mile distant and several hundred feet lower. Taking a trail down the bluff that seemed more promising than the wagon tracks, I began to search for the road at the foot of the bluff, only to find every semblance of a road gone. I lost more than a half-day's precious time, and again was thrown into anxiety lest I had missed the long-sought train.

The next incident that I remember vividly was my attempt to cross the Columbia, just below the mouth of the Snake River. I had seen but few Indians on the whole trip and, in fact, the camp I found there on the bank of the great river was the first I distinctly remember coming upon. I could not induce the Indians to take me over; they seemed surly and unfriendly. Their behavior was so in con-

trast to that of the Indians on the Sound that I could not help wondering what it meant. No one, to my knowledge, lost his life at the hands of the Indians that season, but the next summer all or nearly all the travelers who ventured into that country unprotected were murdered.

That night I camped late, opposite Wallula (old Fort Walla Walla), in a sand storm of great fury. I tethered my pony this time, and rolled myself up in the blanket, only to find myself fairly buried in the drifting sand in the morning. It required a great effort to creep out of the blanket, and an even greater effort to free the blanket from the accumulated sand. By this time the wind had gone down and comparative calm prevailed.



I spent two hours calling across the river at the top of my voice

Then came the attempt to make myself heard across the wide river by the people of the fort. I traveled up and down the river bank for half a mile or so, in the hope of catching a favorable breeze to carry my voice to the fort, yet all to no avail. I sat upon the bank hopelessly discouraged, not knowing what to do. I must have been two hours hallooing at the top of my voice, until I was hoarse from the violent effort.

Finally, while sitting there wondering what to do, I spied a blue smoke arising from a cabin on the other side. Soon after I saw a man; he immediately responded to my renewed efforts to attract attention. The trouble had been that the people were all asleep while I was there in the early morning expending my breath for nothing.

The man was Shirley Ensign, of Olympia, who had established a ferry across the Columbia River and had lingered to set over belated immigrants, if any should come along. He came across the river and gave me glad tidings. He had been out on the trail fifty miles or more and had met my people. They were camped some thirty miles away, he thought, and they would reach the ferry on the following day.

But I could not wait there for them. Procuring a fresh horse, I started out in a cheerful mood, determined to reach camp that night if I could possibly do so. Sundown came, and there were no signs of camp. Dusk came on, and still no signs. Then I spied some cattle grazing on the upland, and soon came upon the camp in a ravine that had shut it from view.

Rejoicing and outbursts of grief followed. I inquired for my mother the first thing. She was not there. Months before she had been buried in the sands of the Platte valley. My younger brother also lay buried on the Plains, near Independence Rock. The scene that followed is of too sacred memory to write about.

When we came to consider how the party should proceed, I advised the over-mountain trip. But I cautioned them to expect some snow and much hard work.

"How long will it take?" they asked.

"About three weeks."

This brought disappointment; they had thought they were about through with the journey.

"You came to stay with us, didn't you?"

"I want to; but what about my wife and the two babies, at the island?"

Father said someone must go and look after them. So Oliver was sent ahead, while I was to take his place and help the immigrants through the Natchess Pass.

In our train were fifty or more head of stock, seven wagons, and seventeen people. We made the trip across the divide in twenty-two days without serious mishap or loss. This was good time, considering the difficulties that beset our way at every step. Every man literally "put his shoulder to the wheel." We were compelled often to take hold of the wheels to boost the wagons over the logs or to ease them down steep places. Our force was divided into three groups — one man to each wagon to drive, four to act as wheelmen, father and the

women, on foot or horseback, to drive the stock. God bless the women folk of the Plains! Nobler, braver, more uncomplaining souls were never known. I have often thought that someone ought to write a just tribute to their valor and patience, a book of their heroic deeds.

One day we encountered a newly fallen tree, cocked up on its own upturned roots, four feet from the ground. Go around it we could not; to cut it out with our dulled, flimsy saw seemed an endless task.

"Dig down, boys," said father, and in short order every available shovel was out of the wagons. Very soon the way was open fully four feet deep, and oxen and wagons passed under the obstruction.

Do you say that we endured great hardships? That depends upon the point of view. As to this return trip, I can truly say for myself that it was not one of hardship. I enjoyed overcoming the difficulties, and so did the greater number of the company. Many of them, it is true, were weakened by the long trip across the Plains; but better food was now obtainable, and the goal was near at hand. It was a positive pleasure, therefore, to pass over the miles, one by one, assured that final success was a matter of only a very short time.

When our little train at last emerged from the forests and came out into the Nesqually plains, it was almost as if we had come into a noonday sun from a dungeon, so marked was the contrast. Hundreds of cattle, sheep, and horses were quietly grazing, scattered over the landscape as far as one could see. The spirits of the tired party rose as they looked upon

this scene, indicating a contentment and prosperity in which they might participate if they so desired.

For a short time the little camp of seven wagons and three tents halted on the edge of the prairie to take breath and to look over the new country. But there soon came a time when the camp must be broken up. No more camp fires with the fragrant coffee morning and evening; no more smoking the pipe together over jests, or serious talk; no more tucks in the dresses of the ladies, compelled by the exigencies of daily travel but now to be abandoned under the inexorable law of custom or fashion; no more lumps of butter at night, churned during the day by the movement of the wagon and the can containing the morning's milk. We must hie us off to prepare shelter from the coming storms of winter; to the care of the stock and the preparations for planting; to the beginning of a new life of independence.

We were all far away from what all yet thought of as home, and admonished that winter was coming on, we realized that after a short season of recreation and rest we must separate, each to his task. This we did. The actors separated; and now, as I write, almost all have gone on that greater journey, in which the two of us left are so soon to join.

It almost goes without saying, however, that before the final break-up of the group and the separation of the parties there must be some sort of celebration of the event, a sort of house warming or surprise party — something must be done out of the usual course of events. So, what better could these people do than to visit the island home they had heard so much

about, and see for themselves some of the wonderland described?

"What in the world are we going to do with all these people?" I said, half apologetically, partly quizzically and yet with a tinge of earnestness illy concealed, to my wife when we finally reached the island.

"Oh, never mind, we will get along all right some way. I'll venture father has brought a tent," she replied. And sure enough, the party had brought the three tents that had served them so well on the long journey. They had bedding also.

It was not long before father had been over to the cabin and taken the measurements.

"Eighteen feet square," he said. "That's a pretty good size, but I don't see why you boys didn't build it higher. It's scant seven feet."

Yes, the walls were but seven feet high. When the cabin was being built, the logs had run out, the sky had been threatening, and we had had a race with a storm to get a roof over our heads.

"But that's a good fireplace," he continued. "There must be pretty good clay here to hold these round stones so firmly. And that's as good a cat-and-clay chimney as I had in Ohio, only mine was taller; but I don't see that it would draw any better than this." This one was just nine feet high.

The floor was rough lumber, or had been when laid, but the stiff scrub brush of twigs and the strong arms of house cleaners had worn off the roughness till when cleaned it presented a quite creditable appearance.

And the wall paper! "Why, you have a good library on these walls; all the reading matter right side up, too. The *New York Tribune* is a great paper, indeed; you must have sent for it right away when you got here." And so I had, and continued to take it steadily for eighteen years.

Our visitors were all soon at home with their tents up, their blankets out airing, and the camp fires lit. With an abandon truly refreshing they turned out like children from school to have a good time.

The garden, of course, was drawn upon, and the words, "Such delicious vegetables I never saw before," fell from a dozen lips during that stay. The turnip patch had been planted in September. "Why, that beats anything I ever saw," father said; and as insignificant as it may seem, our garden had a decided effect upon the minds of the party. "Why, here vegetables are growing in November. At home, in Iowa, they would by this time be frozen as solid as a brick." "These are the best-flavored potatoes I ever ate," said another.

The lady of the cabin had growing near the house a row of sweet peas that shed fragrance to the innermost corner of our little cabin and to the tents, and that supplied bouquets for the tables and plenty of small talk. Our flowers were compared with those "in the States."

And so the little garden, the sweet peas, and other flowers, wild and cultivated, brought contentment among those who at first had had a feeling of despondency and disappointment.

Didn't we have clambakes? I should say! And

didn't the women folk come in loaded with berries? And what whoppers of huckleberry puddings we had, and huckleberry pies, and all sorts of good things that the ingenuity of the housewives could conjure up!

I had frequently seen deer trotting on the beach and told my visitors so, but somehow they could not so readily find them — they had been too noisy. But soon a fat buck was bagged and the cup of joy was full. The feast was on.

Never did kings or queens enjoy their palaces more, nor millionaires their princely residences, than the humble immigrant party did the cabin and their tents in their free and luxurious life. Queens might have their jewels, but did we not have ours? Did we not have our two babies, "the nicest, smartest, cutest in all the world"? Did we not have a profusion of fresh air to inhale at every breath, and appetites that made every morsel of food of exquisite flavor?

But after surveying the situation, father said the island home would not do for him. He had come two thousand miles to live near his children; and so I decided to give up my claim and take up another near his, on the mainland. Abandoning the results of more than a year's hard work, I acted upon his request, and across the bay we built our third cabin.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

INDIAN WAR DAYS

THE little band of pioneers came into a heritage beyond their wildest dreams when they settled on the land where the city of Puyallup now stands, across the bay from the first island home. Here was a soil unsurpassed in richness, and here we built our cabins and cultivated the land.

Let us look in on this little colony two years after their arrival in the autumn of 1853. Their clearing had widened sufficiently to let the sun in but not enough to afford a continuous view of one another's cabins or the great mountain. No money had come into the valley in return for their crops, for the double reason that as yet there was but little to sell and if there had been a surplus the settlers could not have got it to the market because of the lack of a road over which a load could be hauled.

One little incident will illustrate. Anyone passing through the fir forests will remember the wonderful size of surface roots of the fir trees, in some places running out part above the surface and nearly as big as a man's body. One day when I was driving a cart over the road that the pioneers had opened, the wheels passed over and left the cart bed resting solidly on the big root, and so, in the common expression of the country, I was "stuck." This will give a faint idea of what an early-day road was like.

In places a glimpse of smoke from a neighbor's cabin might be seen or the sound of voices heard. All were busy in their clearing, "making hay while there was sun," before the winter rains set in.

At nightfall on October 28, 1855, the startling word came that all the settlers living on White River had been killed by the Indians and that the next day those in the Puyallup valley would be massacred. At the risk of his life a friendly Indian brought this news to us.

The massacre had occurred less than twenty miles from where we lived. For all we knew, the Indians might be on us at any moment.

There were only three men of us, and we knew we could not resist an attack; so we prepared to leave our little settlement and flee for safety to Fort Steilacoom, fifteen miles away. The first thing we did was to harness and hitch the team to the wagon. Then we opened the gates to let the calves get to their mothers, turned the pigs loose, and opened the chicken-house door — all this without light. Then the drive for our lives began, the women and babies



The night ride to the fort.

lying close to the bottom of the wagon, the men with guns ready for action.

We reached Fort Steilacoom unmolested. But we could not in safety stop there. The place was really no fort at all — simply a few cabins and some thin board houses — and it was already filled with refugees from the surrounding settlements. There was neither comfort nor safety here. The settlers had left their homes in such haste that they were almost absolutely destitute of food, clothing, and bedding. So my father, my brother Oliver, and I, with our families, pushed on into the town of Steilacoom and built for ourselves there a blockhouse where we lived until the trouble was past. Here we set up a little store, where we sold things to the settlers and to the soldiers who were soon sent to the fort.

This blockhouse was about fifty feet wide and nearly a hundred feet long. It was bullet-proof, without windows, and two stories high. A heavy

door swung at the front entrance to the lower story, while an inclined walk from higher ground in the rear enabled us to reach the upper story; inside, a ladder served the purpose of a stairway between the two stories.

The blockhouse proved a haven of safety during the Indian trouble, not only to our own family but to many of our neighbors besides. Seventy-five such houses were built during these troublous times. Numbers of settlers did not go back to their homes for several years.

The Indians finally came in force just across the Sound and defied the troops. They also prevented the soldiers from landing from the steamer sent against them. A few days later we heard the guns from Fort Nesqually, which, however, I have always thought was a false alarm. It was when a captive child was brought in that we began to feel the gravity of the situation.

Yet many of our fears turned out to be baseless. For instance, one day Johnny Boatman, a little boy not quite four years old, was lost. His mother was almost crazed, for word went out that the Indians had stolen him. A day later the lad was found under a tree, asleep. He had simply wandered away.

A perplexing feature of the whole affair came from the fact that there were two warring camps among the forces of both the Indians and the whites. Some of the Indians were friendly; we had ample proof of that fact. Some of the whites were against the harsh measures taken by those in charge. This dissension led to much unnecessary trouble and bloodshed.

The war was brought on by the fact that the Indians had been wronged. This seems certain. They had been robbed of their lands by the treaties made in 1854, and there had been atrocious murders of Indians by irresponsible white men. The result was suffering and trouble for all of us.

The only helpful feature of the unfortunate affair was that it did bring more ready money to the settlers. During the third year of the trouble I remember we were selling steers off the range at fifty dollars per head; butter was selling at fifty to seventy-five cents per pound, and other farm products at like prices. No wonder all hands became more contented even in our unhappy situation. Anyway we did not have time to be otherwise. But not even the added money could compensate for other evils.

The war brought troops, many of whom were reckless men; the army then was not up to the standard of today. Besides, there came in the wake of the soldiers a trail of gamblers and other disreputable people to vex and annoy us. In the blockhouses could be seen bullet marks which we knew did not come from Indians.

I remember a little drummer boy, known as Scotty, who used frequently to come over to our home. He was a bright little fellow, and the Colonel, finding it was agreeable to us, encouraged him to make these visits, perhaps to get him away a little from the rough life of the post. Scotty had been living with a soldier there who, as report had it, used to get drunk and beat his wife. When my wife asked Scotty one

day if the soldier abused his wife, he replied, "Well, I can't say exactly that he abuses her. He only cuffs and kicks her around the house sometimes." Poor boy! he had seen so much rough living that he didn't know what abuse meant.

Not all of the soldiers were of this drunken cast, of course. Many brave and noble men were among the military forces. The Indians, naturally, did not discriminate between good and bad soldiers. They hated and fought the troops, while at the same time they would often protect the pioneers, with whom they had been generally friendly.

I had lived in peace with these Indians and they had gained my confidence. As events subsequently showed, I held their friendship and confidence. At one time, during the war, a party of Indians held me harmless within their power. They had said they would not harm those who had advocated their cause at the time the treaties were made.

Soon after the outbreak noted, I disregarded the earnest entreaties of many persons and went back to my stock and to the cabin to care for the abandoned dairy and young cattle. I did not believe the Indians would molest me, but took the precaution of having my rifle in a convenient place. I did not need to use it. When nightfall came I did withdraw from my cabin, not from fear of war parties, but of individual outlaws.

The sole military experience of my life consisted in an expedition to the Puyallup valley with a company of seventeen settlers soon after the outbreak described. The settlers of Puyallup had left their



The blockhouse, a haven of safety.

homes the day after the massacre in such haste that they were almost destitute of clothing, bedding, and food, as well as shelter, and they wanted to go back to their cabins and collect some of their possessions. A strong military force had penetrated the Indian country — the upper Puyallup valley and beyond. We knew of this, but did not know that the soldiers had retreated by another road, virtually driven out, the very day we went in armed with all sorts of guns and with scarcely any organization.

We had gone into the Indian stronghold not to fight Indians, but to recover property. Nevertheless, there would have been hot work if we had been attacked. The settlers knew the country as well as did the Indians and were prepared to meet them on their own ground and in their own way.

The Indians were in great force but a few miles distant. They had scouts on our tracks, but did not molest us. We visited every settler's cabin and

secured the belongings not destroyed. On the sixth day we came away with great loads of "plunder." All the while we were in blissful ignorance that the troops had been withdrawn, and that no protection lay between us and the Indian forces.

After this outbreak, Indians and settlers about our neighborhood lived in peace, on the whole. To anyone who treated them fairly, the Indians became loyal friends.

Mowich Man, an Indian whom I was to know during many years, was one of our neighbors. He frequently passed our cabin with his canoe and people. He was a great hunter, a crack shot, and an all-round Indian of good parts. Many is the saddle of venison that he brought me in the course of years. Other pioneers likewise had special friends among the Indians.

Some of Mowich Man's people were fine singers. His camp, or his canoe if he was traveling, was always the center for song and merriment. It is a curious fact that one seldom can get the Indian music by asking for it, but rather must wait for its spontaneous outburst. Indian songs in those days came from nearly every nook and corner and seemed to pervade the whole country. We often could hear the songs and accompanying stroke of the paddle long before we saw the floating canoes.



Carrying a dairy to the new mining town.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE STAMPEDE FOR THE GOLD DIGGINGS

HARDLY had we got fairly over the Indian War when another wave of excitement broke up our pioneer plans again. On March 21, 1858, the schooner *Wild Pigeon* arrived at Steilacoom with the news that the Indians had discovered gold on Fraser River, that they had traded several pounds of the precious metal with the Hudson's Bay Company, and that three hundred people had left Victoria and its vicinity for the new land of El Dorado. Furthermore, the report ran, the mines were exceedingly rich.

The wave of excitement that went through the little settlement upon the receipt of this news was repeated in every town and hamlet of the whole Pacific Coast. It continued even around the world, summoning adventurous spirits from all civilized countries of the earth.

Everybody, women folk and all, wanted to go, and

would have started pell-mell had there not been that restraining influence of the second thought, especially powerful with people who had just gone through the mill of adversity. My family was still in the blockhouse that we had built in the town of Steilacoom during the Indian War. Our cattle were peacefully grazing on the plains a few miles away.

One of the local merchants, Samuel McCaw, bundled up a few goods, made a flying trip up Fraser River, and came back with fifty ounces of gold dust and the news that the mines were all that had been reported and more too. This, of course, added fuel to the flame. We all believed a new era had dawned upon us, similar to that of ten years before in California, which changed the world's history. High hopes were built, most of them to end in disappointment.

Not but that there were extensive mines, and that they were rich, and that they were easily worked; how to get to them was the puzzling question. The early voyagers had slipped up the Fraser before the freshets came down from the melting snows to swell the torrents of that river. Those going later either failed altogether and gave up the unequal contest, or lost an average of one canoe or boat out of three in the persistent attempt. How many lives were lost never will be known.

Contingents began to arrive in Steilacoom from Oregon, from California, and finally from "the States." Steamers great and small began to appear, with little cargo but with passenger lists that were said to be nothing compared to those of ships coming

in less than a hundred miles to the north of us. These people landing in Whatcom¹ in such great numbers must be fed, we agreed. If the multitude would not come to us to drink the milk of our cows and eat our butter, what better could we do than to take our cows to the place where we were told the multitude did not hesitate to pay a dollar a gallon for milk and any price one might ask for fresh butter!

But how to get even to Whatcom was the rub. All space on the steamers was taken from week to week for freight and passengers, and no room was left for cattle. In fact, the run on provisions for the gold rush was so great that at one time we were almost threatened with famine. Finally our cattle, mostly cows, were loaded in an open scow and taken in tow alongside the steamer — the *Sea Bird*, I think.

All went well enough until we arrived off the head of Whidbey Island. Here a choppy sea from a light wind began slopping over the scow and evidently would sink us despite our utmost efforts at bailing. When the captain would slow down the speed of his steamer, all was well; but the moment greater power was applied, over the gunwales would come the water.

The dialogue that ensued between the captain and me was more emphatic than elegant. He dared not risk letting go of us, however, or of running us under, for fear of incurring the risk of heavy damages. I would not consent to be landed. So about the twentieth of June we were set adrift in Bellingham Bay and, tired and sleepy, landed on the beach.

¹ Now Bellingham.

Our cows must have feed, they must be milked, the milk must be marketed. There was no rest for us during another thirty-six hours. In fact, there was but little sleep for anybody on that beach at the time. Several ocean steamers had just dumped three thousand people on the beach, and there was still a scramble to find a place to build a house or stretch a tent, or even to spread a blanket, for there were great numbers already there, landed by previous steamers. The staking of lots on the tide flats at night, when the tide was out, seemed to be a staple industry.

A few days after my arrival four steamers came with an aggregate of more than two thousand passengers. Many of these, however, did not leave the steamer; they took passage either back to their port of departure — San Francisco or Victoria or other points on the Sound. The ebb tide had set in, and although many steamers came later and landed passengers, their return lists soon became large and the population began to diminish.

Taking my little dory that we had with us on the scow, I rowed to the largest steamer lying at anchor. So many small boats surrounded the steamer that I could not get within a hundred feet of it. All sorts of craft filled the intervening space, from the smallest Indian canoe to large barges, the owner of each craft striving to secure customers.

The great difficulty was to find a trail to the gold fields. This pass and that pass were tried without success. I saw sixty men with heavy packs on their backs start out in one company. Every one of these had to come back after floundering in the mountains

for weeks. The Indians, among whom the spirit of war still smoldered, headed off some of the parties; the snows kept back others; and finally the British, watching their own interests, blocked the way through their land. As a result the boom burst, and people resought their old homes.

It is doubtful if another stampede of such dimensions as that to the Fraser in 1858 ever occurred where the suffering was so great, the prizes so few, and the loss of life proportionately so great. Probably not one in ten that made the effort reached the mines, and of those who did the usual percentage drew the blanks inevitable in such stampedes. And yet the mines were immensely rich; many millions of dollars of gold came from the find in the lapse of years, and gold is still coming, though now more than sixty years have passed.

While the losses of the people of the Puget Sound country were great, nevertheless good came out of the great stampede in the large accession of population that remained after the return tide was over. Many people had become stranded and could not leave the country, but went to work with a will to make a living there. Of these not a few are still honored citizens of the state that has been carved out of the territory of that day.



Detroit Photographic Company

A typical pioneer settlement in a clearing in the Oregon forest.

CHAPTER TWENTY

MAKING A PERMANENT HOME IN THE WILDS

THE days that followed our venture in the gold field were more peaceful and prosperous. Soon after the Indian War we had moved to a new claim. We began now to think we would at last realize to the full our dream of earlier days, to settle on a farm and build a home.

Three neighbors were all we had, and the nearest lived nearly two miles away. Two of them kept bachelor's hall. The thick, high timber made it impossible for us to see any of our neighbors' houses. We could reach only one by a road; to the others we might go by a trail. Under such conditions we could not have a public school. This, however, did not keep us from having a school of our own.

One day one of our farther-off neighbors, who lived more than four miles away, came to visit us. Naturally the children flocked around him to hear his stories in broad Scotch and to ply him with questions. In his turn, he began to ask them questions. One of these was, "When do you expect to go to school?"

"Oh, we have school now," responded the children. "We have school every day."

"And pray, who is your teacher, and where is your schoolhouse?"

"Father teaches us at home every morning before breakfast. He hears the lessons then, and mother helps us too."

"Your father told me a while ago that you had your breakfast at six o'clock. What time do you get up?"

"Why, father sets the clock for half-past four, and that gives us an hour while mother gets breakfast, you know."

Boys and girls of today may pity those poor pioneer children who had to get up so early. They may as well dismiss such feelings from their hearts. The children were cheerful and healthy; they did some work during the day in addition to studying their lessons; and besides they went to bed earlier than some boys and girls do these days.

In January, 1861, the wreck of the steamer *North-erner* brought great sorrow to us. My brother Oliver was among those lost on it. We had invested all our savings in a new stock of merchandise — for we had become traders while we were at Steilacoom during the days of the Indian troubles and had

developed our business at Whatcom during the gold-rush days — and this stock, not all paid for, also went down with the ship.

It was necessary for us to make another start in life, and so once again we moved to a new location — this time establishing a homestead in the Puyallup valley. Here we lived and farmed for forty-one years, seeing the town of Puyallup grow up on and around the homestead. Here, in time, more children were born to us. Here we built the cabin that became our home for twenty-four years. A living reminder of this home is still preserved in Pioneer Park, Puyallup — the ivy vine that for so many years covered the cabin. The shape and size of the cabin are indicated by the cement supports that have been erected to support the ivy. A public drinking fountain has been placed under the vine.

Jerry Stilly had taken a squatter's right on the quarter section of land that afterward became my homestead and built the first section, or room, to which I afterward added. The cabin that Stilly built was of inch-board walls, eight feet high and sixteen feet square and covered with clapboards. Soon after coming into possession of the claim, I built another of the same dimensions, leaving a space of five feet between the two for a double fireplace and chimney.

These fireplaces became a source of great comfort for many a long winter evening, furnishing both warmth and light. They were built of float lava rock that had been belched from the throat of the great Mt. Rainier and brought to the lower level by



The site of the cabin home in Puyallup is now Pioneer Park, Ezra Meeker's gift to the city that he founded. In it still stands the ivy vine that for fifty years grew over the cabin.

the avalanches and later the mighty floods that had inundated the valley ages ago. They were so light in weight that an ordinary farm-wagon box full was not a heavy load, and so soft they could be shaped with an ordinary chopping ax without injuring, except dulling the sharp edge just a little. To have fireplaces with smooth-faced stones and a chimney that did not smoke seemed to be the very acme of elegance and comfort.

The inside of the cabin was first covered with newspapers and a little later with real wall paper for warmth, and appearance as well, and really we felt as proud of the cabin, "our home," as we afterward did of the more pretentious homestead that we erected near by.

In the Puyallup valley there were more neighbors than we had had before — two families to the square

mile. Yet no neighbors were in sight, because the timber and underbrush were so thick we could scarcely see two rods from the edge of our clearing. But the neighbors were near enough for us to provide a public school and build a schoolhouse.

Some of the neighbors took their axes to cut the logs, some their oxen to drag them, others their saws and cleaving tools to make clapboards for the roof. Others again, more handy with tools, made the benches out of split logs, or, as we called them, puncheons. With willing hands to help, the schoolhouse soon received the finishing touches.

The side walls were scarcely high enough for the doorway, so one was cut in the end. The door hung on wooden hinges, which squeaked a good deal when the door was opened or shut; but the children did not mind that. The roof answered well enough for the ceiling overhead, and a cut in one of the logs on each side made two long, narrow windows for light. The older children sat with their faces to the walls, with long shelves in front of them, while the smaller tots sat on low benches near the middle of the room. When the weather would permit, the teacher left the door open to admit more light. There was no need to let in more fresh air, as the roof was quite open and the cracks between the logs let in plenty of it.

Sometimes we had a woman for a teacher, and then the salary was small, as she boarded around. That meant some discomfort for her during part of the time, where the surroundings were not pleasant.

One day little Carrie, our daughter, started to go to school, but soon came running back out of breath.

“Mamma! Mamma! I saw a great big cat sharpening his claws on a great big tree, just the way pussy does!” she said as soon as she could speak.

Sure enough, upon examination, there were the marks of a cougar as high up on the tree as I could reach. It must have been a big one to reach so far up the tree. But the incident soon dropped out of mind and the children went to school on the trail as if nothing had happened.

Afterward I met a cougar on a lonely trail in the woods near where Auburn¹ now stands. I had been attempting to drive some wild cattle home, but they were so unruly that they scattered through the timber and I was obliged to go on without them late in the day. The forest was so dense that it was hard to see the road even when the sun was shining; on a cloudy day it seemed almost like night, though I could see well enough to keep on the crooked trail.

Just before I got to Stuck River crossing I came to a turn in the trail where it crossed the top of a big fir that had been turned up by the roots and had fallen nearly parallel with the trail. The big roots held the butt of the tree up from the ground. I think the tree was four feet in diameter a hundred feet from the butt, and the whole body, from root to top, was eighty-four steps long, or about two hundred and fifty feet.

I didn't stop to step it then. But you may be sure I took some pretty long strides about that time; for just as I stepped over the fallen tree near the top, I saw something move on the big body near the roots.

¹ About eight miles northeast of Tacoma.

The thing was coming right toward me. In an instant I realized that it was a great cougar. He was pretty, but he did not look especially pleasing to me.

I didn't know what to do. I had no gun with me, and I knew perfectly well there was no use to run. Was I scared, did you say? Did you ever have creepers run up your back and right to the roots of your hair, and nearly to the top of your head?

Did the cougar hurt me? If I had been hurt I shouldn't have been here to tell you this story. The fun of it was that the cougar hadn't seen me yet, but as soon as he did he scampered off as if the Old Harry himself were after him, while I sped off down the trail as if old Beelzebub were after me.

But no wild animals ever harmed us, and we did not die for want of food, clothing, or shelter, although we did have some experiences that were trying. Before the clearings were large we sometimes were pinched for both food and clothing. I will not say we suffered much for either, though I know that some families at times lived on potatoes, straight. Usually fish could be had in abundance, and there was considerable game — some bear and plenty of deer.

The clothing gave us more trouble, as but little money came to us for the small quantity of produce we had to spare. I remember one winter when we were at our wits' ends for shoes. We just could not get money to buy shoes enough to go around, but we managed to get leather to make each member of the family one pair. We killed a pig to get bristles for the wax-ends, cut the pegs from alder log and seasoned them in the oven, and made the lasts out

of the same timber. Those shoes were clumsy, to be sure; but they kept our feet dry and warm, and we felt thankful for them and sorry for some neighbors' children, who had to go barefooted even in quite cold weather. Carrie once had a pair of nice white shoes "for best," I remember, that one of her brothers made for her, with buckskin uppers and light tan-colored soles.

In the cabins there was as wide variance in habits as there is in more pretentious homes today. Some of the women were careless and untidy about their housekeeping, while others believed "cleanliness is next to godliness." A goodly number of the pioneer women would become helpers in the field and gardens whether the men of the household thought it was the proper thing for them or not. Flower gardens soon appeared in every dooryard to enliven the homes and spread contentment in the households.

You must not think that we had no recreation and that we were a sorrowful set. There was never a happier lot of people than the hard-working pioneers and their families. We had joy in our home life, and amusements as well as labor.

My mind still harks back to our happy life in the little cabin in the forest; to the twilight concert of the bird songsters; to the dripping dews of the dense foliage of the trees; to the pleasant gatherings within the cabin; to the old-time music of the violin, flute, melodeon, and finally the piano, mingled with the voices of many now hushed and hidden from us; to the simple life of the pioneer; to the cheerful glow of the double open fires within the cabin; to

the more cheerful glow of contentment notwithstanding the stern battle of life confronting the inmates of the cabin — all these visions vividly arise before me.

Music was our greatest pleasure. We never tired of it. "Uncle John," as everyone called him, the old teacher, was constantly teaching the children music; so it soon came about they could read their music as readily as they could their schoolbooks.

No Christmas ever went by without a Christmas tree, at which the whole neighborhood joined; the Fourth of July was never passed without a celebration. We made the presents for the tree if we could not buy them, and supplied the musicians, reader, and orator for the celebration. Everybody had something to do and a voice in saying what should be done, and that very fact made all happy.

When we entered this cabin we were without a team, without a wagon, without money, and with but scant supply of household goods and clothing, seven cows and a steer (Harry), a few pigs, and a dozen or so of chickens comprising our worldly belongings, albeit the bears divided the pigs with us and the skunks took their share of the chickens. One cow traded to Robert Moore for a steer (Jack) to mate the one we had, gave us a team.

If the walls of this cabin had had ears and could speak, we could — until they finally decayed only a few years ago — have heard from them of the councils when the shoes gave out; of how, with a borrowed auger and our own ax a sled was made and work in earnest in the clearing began; of how in two years



Mr. and Mrs. Meeker standing before the last remnants of the cabin in Puyallup in which they lived for twenty-four years.

the transplanted orchard began to bear; of how the raspberries, blackberries, and other small fruit came into full bearing, and salmon berries were neglected, and Siwash muck-a-muck had lost its attraction; of how the steamed ladyfinger potatoes would burst open just like popcorn, and of how the meat of the baked kidney potatoes would open as white as the driven snow — small things to be sure, but we may well remember the sum of life's happiness is made up of small things and that as keen enjoyment of life exists within the walls of a cabin as in a palace.

The isolation of the pioneers from the outside world had a tendency to draw them together as one great family. In those days, while there was of necessity great self-reliance, there was also much wholesome dependence upon our neighbors; in all the matters of daily life the need was felt, and the call was answered. One instance will illustrate this spirit: In consequence of the large immigration and increased demand, prices of provisions had run sky high and out of reach of some of the recent immigrants with large families. George Bush had squatted on a claim seven miles south of Olympia and had an abundance of farm produce but would not sell a pound of anything to a speculator. But to all immigrants alike he gave, without money and without price. "Return it when you can," he would say — and so he divided up his whole crop, then worth thousands of dollars.

It was sixteen miles to our market town, Steilacoom, over the roughest kind of road. We could not make the trip out and back in one day, and we did not have money to pay hotel bills. We managed in this way: We would drive out part of the way and camp; the next morning we would drive into town very early, do our trading, and, if possible, drive back home the same day. If we were not able to do this, we camped on the road again. But if the night was not too dark, we would reach home the same day we left Steilacoom. And oh, what an appetite we would have by the time we got home, and how bright the fire would be, and how joyous the welcome in the little cabin!

Now the timber is all gone and in its place are brick blocks and pleasant, modest homes. Where the roots and stumps once occupied the ground, now smiling fruit gardens adorn the landscape and fill the purses of fourteen hundred fruit growers and supply the wants of six thousand people. Instead of the slow, trudging ox team, driven to the market town sixteen miles distant, with a day in camp on the way, I see fifty-four railroad trains a day thundering through the town. I see electric lines with crowded cars carrying passengers to tidewater and to the rising city of Tacoma, but seven miles distant. I see a quarter of a million people within a radius of thirty miles, where solitude reigned supreme fifty-four years ago, interrupted only by the song of the Indian, the thump of his canoe paddle, or the din of his gambling revels. When I go down to the Sound, I see miles of shipping docks where once the waters rippled over a pebbly beach covered with shellfish. I look farther and see hundreds of steamers plying thither and yon on the great inland sea where fifty-four years ago only the Indian's canoe noiselessly skimmed the water. I see hundreds of vessels that will visit every sea of the globe, either at dock receiving or discharging cargo or being towed here and there. In the old days scarce a dozen had in a year ventured the voyage. Such are some of the changes wrought in the fifty years since pioneer life began in the Puyallup valley.



Mr. and Mrs. Meeker (in exact center of picture) with their children and grandchildren at their home in Puyallup at the wedding of their second daughter, Carrie.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FINDING AND LOSING A FORTUNE

OUR youthful dream of becoming farmers was now realized in fullest measure. The clearing was gradually enlarged, and abundant crops came to reward our efforts. The comfort and plenty we had hoped and struggled for were attained. Next came a development in the family fortunes that we had not dreamed of. Never had we thought to conduct a business that would require a London office.

This unexpected prosperity came to us through the hop-growing industry, upon which we entered with all our force. The business was well started by the time of my father's death in 1869, and in the fifteen years following the acreage planted to hops was increased until the crop of 1882—a yield of more than seventy-one tons—gave the Puyallup

valley the banner crop, as to quantity, of the United States — and, some persons asserted, of the world.

The public, generally, gave me the credit of introducing hop culture into the Northwest. Therefore it seems fitting to tell here the story of the beginnings of an industry that came to have great importance.

In March of 1865, Charles Wood of Olympia sent about three pecks of hop roots to Steilacoom for my father, Jacob R. Meeker, who then lived on his claim in the Puyallup valley. John V. Meeker, my brother, passed by my cabin when he carried the sack of roots on his back from Steilacoom to my father's home, a distance of about twenty miles, and from the sack I took roots enough to plant six hills of hops. As far as I know those were the first hops planted in the Puyallup valley. My father planted the remainder, and in the following September harvested the equivalent of one bale of hops, 180 pounds. This was sold for eighty-five cents a pound, or a little more than a hundred and fifty dollars for the bale.

This sum was more money than had been received by any of the settlers in the Puyallup valley, except perhaps two, from the products of their farms for that year. My father's near neighbors obtained a barrel of hop roots from California the next year, and planted them the following spring — four acres. I obtained what roots I could get that year, but not enough to plant an acre. The following year (1867) I planted four acres, and for twenty-six successive years thereafter we added to the area planted, until our holdings reached past the five-hundred-acre mark and our production was over four hundred tons a year.

None of us knew anything about the hop business, and it was entirely by accident that we engaged in it. But seeing that there were possibilities of great gain, I took pains to study hop culture, and found that by allowing our hops to mature thoroughly, curing them at a low temperature, and baling them while hot, we could produce hops that would compete with any produced in the world. Others of my neighbors planted them, and so did many people in Oregon, until soon there came to be a field for purchasing and shipping hops. But the fluctuations in price were so great that in a few years many growers became discouraged and lost their holdings.

Finally, during the failure of the world's hop crop in the year 1882, there came to be unheard-of prices for hops, and fully one third of the crop of the Puyallup valley was sold for a dollar a pound. I had that year nearly one hundred thousand pounds, which brought an average of seventy cents a pound.

My first hop house was built in 1868. We frequently employed more than a thousand people during harvest time. Many of these were Indians, some of whom would come for a thousand miles down the coast from British Columbia and even the confines of Alaska; they came in the great cedar-log canoes manned with twenty paddlers or more. For the most part I managed my Indian workers very easily. Once I had to tie up two of them to a tree for getting drunk; their friends came and stole away the prisoners — which was what I intended they should do.

It was in 1870, eighteen years after my arrival

from across the Plains, that I made my first return journey to the States. I had to go through the mud to the Columbia River, then out over the bar to the Pacific Ocean, and down to San Francisco. Then there was the seven days' journey over the Central and Union Pacific and connecting lines; this meant sitting bolt upright all the way, for there were no sleeping cars then, and no diners either.

About 1882 I had come to realize that the important market for hops was in England, and E. Meeker & Co. began sending trial shipments, first seven bales, then the following year five hundred bales, then fifteen hundred. Finally our annual shipments reached eleven thousand bales a year, or the equivalent in value of half a million dollars — said at that time to be the largest export hop business of any one concern in the United States. At one time I had two full trainloads between the Pacific and the Atlantic, on their way to London. I spent four winters in London dealing in the hop market.

Little as I had thought ever to handle an international business, still less had I thought ever to write a book. My first publication was an eighty-page pamphlet descriptive of Washington Territory, printed in 1870. My first real book, *Hop Culture in the United States*, was published in 1883. I mention this fact simply as one instance out of the many that could be given of the unexpected lines of development that life in the new land opened out to the pioneers.

The hop business could not be called a venture; it was simply a growth. The conditions were favor-

able to us in that we could produce hops for the world's market at the lowest prices. We actually pressed the English growers so closely that more than fifteen thousand acres of hops were destroyed in that country.

Our great prosperity was not to last. One evening in 1892, as I stepped out of my office and cast my eyes toward one group of hop houses, it struck me that the hop foliage of a field near by was off color — did not look natural. One of my clerks from the office said the same thing — the vines did not look natural. I walked down to the yards, a quarter of a mile away, and there first saw the hop louse. The yard was literally alive with lice, and they were destroying at least the quality of the hops. I issued a hop circular, sending it to more than six hundred correspondents all along the coast in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, and before the week was out I began to receive samples from them, and letters asking what was the matter with the hops.

It appeared that the attack of lice was simultaneous in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, extending over a distance coastwise of more than five hundred miles, and even inland up the Skagit River, where there was an isolated yard. This plague was like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky to us.

I sent my second son, Fred Meeker, to London to learn the English methods of fighting the pest and to import some spraying machinery. We found to our cost, however, in the course of time, that the English methods did not suit our different conditions ;

for while we could kill the lice, we had to use so much spraying material on the dense foliage that, in killing the lice, we virtually destroyed the hops. Instead of being able to sell our hops at the top price of the market, we saw our product fall to the foot of the list. The last crop I raised cost me eleven cents a pound and sold for three under the hammer at sheriff's sale.

At that time I had advanced to my neighbors and others upon their hop crops more than a hundred thousand dollars, which was lost. These people simply could not pay, and I forgave the debt, taking no judgments against them, and I have never regretted the action. All my accumulations were swept away, and I quit the business — or, rather, the business quit me.

After a long struggle with the hop plague, nearly all the hops were plowed up and the land in the Puyallup valley and elsewhere was used for dairy farming, fruit growing, and general crops. It is actually of a higher value now than when it was bearing hops.



United States Forest Service

Going up the Chilkoot Pass.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TRYING FOR A FORTUNE IN ALASKA

AFTER the failure of the hop business, I was left more or less at sea for some years. I tried various other projects — among them the raising of sugar beets. The country, we soon found, was not adapted to this industry. Then I tried banking, likewise with little success. Finally I decided to strike out for the mines of Alaska. This adventure, taken when I was nearly threescore and ten years of age, was full of exciting experiences. Indeed, it left me richer only in experience.

I had lived in the old Oregon country forty-four years and had never seen a mine. Mining had had no attraction for me. But when my accumulations had all been swallowed up, I decided to take a

chance. In the spring of 1898 I made my first trip over the Chilkoot Pass, went down the Yukon River to Dawson in a flatboat, and ran the famous White Horse Rapids with my load of vegetables for the Klondike miners.

One may read most graphic descriptions of Chilkoot Pass; but the difficulties met by those earlier fortune-seekers who tried it were worse than the wildest fancy can picture. I started in with fifteen tons of freight and got through with nine. On one stretch of two thousand feet, I paid forty dollars a ton for transportation. Some others paid even more.

The trip part of the way reminded me of the scenes on the Plains in 1852, when the people and teams crowded each other on the several parallel trails. At the pass, most of the travel came upon one track, and that so steep the ascent could be made only by cutting steps in the ice and snow — fifteen hundred steps in all. Frequently every step would be full, while crowds jostled each other at the foot of the ascent to get into the single file, each man carrying a hundred-pound pack on his back.

After all sorts of trying experiences, I finally arrived in Dawson, where I sold my fresh potatoes at thirty-six dollars a bushel and other things at proportionate prices. In two weeks I started up the river, homeward bound, with two hundred ounces of Klondike gold in my belt. But four round trips in two years satisfied me that I did not want any more of such experiences.

Once, fortunately, I was detained for a couple of days, and thereby escaped an avalanche that buried

fifty-two other people in the snow. I passed by the morgue the second day after the catastrophe on my way to the summit, doubtless over the bodies of many unknown dead, embedded so deeply in the snow that it was utterly impossible to recover them.

The good ducking I received in my first passage through the White Horse Rapids made me resolve I would not go through there again. But I did it on the very next trip that same year, and came out of it dry. Again, when going down the Thirty-Mile River, it did seem that we could not escape being dashed upon the rocks. But somehow or other we got through safely, though the bank was strewn with wrecks and the waters had swallowed up many victims.

When the Yukon proper was reached, the current was less swift, but the shoals were numerous. More than once we were "hung up" on the bar, each time uncertain how we should get off. No mishap resulted, except once when a hole was jammed into the scow, and we thought we were "goners" for sure; but we effected a landing so quickly that we unloaded our cargo dry.

While I now blame myself for taking such risks, I must admit that I enjoyed it. I was sustained, no doubt, by high hopes of coming out with my "pile." But fate or something else was against me, for mining ventures swept all my gains away "as slick as a mitten," as the old phrase goes. I came out over the rotten ice of the Yukon in April of 1901 to stay, and to vow I never wanted to see another mine or visit another mining country.

In two weeks after my arrival home my wife and I celebrated our golden wedding. The welcome home was a golden one, even if I had not returned with my pockets filled with gold.

Since I was then past my allotted threescore years and ten, it naturally seemed that my ventures were at an end. But for many of these years I had been cherishing a dream that I felt must come true to round out my days most satisfactorily. I longed to go back over the old Oregon Trail and mark it for all time for the children of the pioneers who blazed it, and for the world. How that dream was made to come true is the story to be told in the succeeding part of this book of pioneer stories.



PART THREE

REVIVING PIONEER MEMORIES



Mr. Meeker, Mr. Marden, Jim, Twist, and Dave ready for a trip across the continent.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

OX-TEAM DAYS REVIVED

THE ox is passing — in fact, has passed. The old-time spinning wheel and the hand loom, the quaint old cobbler's bench with its handmade lasts and shoe pegs, the heavy iron mush pot on the crane in the chimney corner — all have gone. The men and women of sixty years or more ago are passing, too. All are laid aside for what is new in the drama of life. While these old-time ways and scenes and actors have had their day, yet the experiences and the lessons they taught are not lost to the world.

The difference between a civilized and an untutored people lies in the application of experiences. The civilized man builds upon the foundations of the past, with hope and ambition for the future. The

savage has neither knowledge of the past nor aspiration for the future. To keep the flame of patriotism alive, we must keep the memory of the past vividly before us.

It was with these thoughts in mind that, fifty-four years after I had first journeyed westward to find a new home in the Oregon country, I decided to make an expedition to mark the old Oregon Trail. There was this further thought, that on this trail heroic men and women had fought a veritable battle — a battle of peace that wrested half a continent from the native race and from another mighty nation contending for mastery in unknown regions of the West. To mark the field of that battle for future generations was a duty waiting for someone; I determined to be the one to fulfill it.

The journey back over the old Oregon Trail by ox team was made during my seventy-sixth and seventy-seventh years. On January 29, 1906, I left my home in Puyallup, Washington, and on November 29, 1907, just twenty-two months later to the day, I reached Washington, our national capital, with my cattle and my old prairie schooner. Not all of this time was spent in travel, of course; a good deal of it was taken up in furthering the purpose of the trip by arranging for the erection and dedication of monuments to mark the trail.

To accomplish the purpose of marking the trail would have been enough to make the journey worth while to me, besides all the interest of freshening my recollections of old times and reviving old memories. There is not space in this book to dwell on all the

contrasts that came to my mind constantly — of the uncleared forests with the farms and orchards of today, of the unbroken prairie lands with the ranches and farms and cities that now border the old trail from the Rockies to the Mississippi. There is nothing like an ox-team journey, I maintain, to make a person realize this country, realize its size, the number of its people, and the variety of conditions in which they live and of occupations by which they live. I wish I could share with every boy and girl in the country the panorama view that unrolled itself before me in this journey from tidewater to tidewater.

The ox team was chosen as a typical reminder of pioneer days. The Oregon Trail, it must be remembered, is essentially an ox-team trail. No more effective instrument, therefore, could have been chosen to attract attention, arouse enthusiasm, and secure aid in forwarding the work, than this living symbol of the old days.

Indeed, too much attention, in one sense, was attracted. I had scarcely driven the outfit away from my own dooryard before the wagon and wagon cover, and even the map of the old trail on the sides of the cover, began to be defaced. First I noticed a name or two written on the wagon bed, then a dozen or more, all stealthily placed there, until the whole was so closely covered that there was no room for more. Finally the vandals began carving initials on the wagon bed and cutting off pieces to carry away. Eventually I put a stop to such vandalism by employing special police, posting notices, and nabbing some offenders in the very act.

Give me Indians on the Plains to contend with ; give me fleas or even the detested sagebrush ticks to burrow into the flesh ; but deliver me from cheap notoriety seekers !

A man by the name of William Marden joined me for the journey across the Plains and stayed with me for three years. He proved to be faithful and helpful.

The team with which I started consisted of one seven-year-old ox, Twist, and one unbroken four-year-old range steer, Dave. When we were ready to start, Twist weighed 1470 pounds and Dave 1560. This order of weight was soon changed. In three months' time Twist gained about 130 pounds and Dave lost about 80. All this time I fed them with a lavish hand all the rolled barley I dared give and all the hay they would eat.

Dave would hook and kick and perform every other mean trick. Besides, he would stick his tongue out from the smallest kind of exertion. He had just been shipped in off the Montana cattle range and had never had a rope on him, unless it was when he was branded. Like a great overgrown booby of a boy, he was flabby in flesh, and he could not endure any sort of exertion without discomfort. At one time I became very nearly discouraged with him.

Yet this was the ox that made the round trip. He bore his end of the yoke from the tidewaters of the Pacific to the tidewaters of the Atlantic, at the Battery in New York City, and on to the city of Washington to meet the President. He finally became subdued, but not conquered. At times he became threatening with his horns, and I never did trust his heels.

The other ox, Twist, died suddenly on August 9, 1906, and was buried within a few rods of the trail. It was two months to a day after his death before I could find a mate for the Dave ox, and then I had to take another five-year-old steer off the cattle range of Nebraska. This steer, Dandy, evidently had never been handled; but he came of good stock and, with the exception of awkwardness, gave me no serious trouble. Dandy was purchased out of the stockyard at Omaha. He then weighed 1470 pounds, and the day before he went to see the President he tipped the scales at the 1760-pound notch. Dandy proved to be a faithful, serviceable ox.

On the journey Dave had to be shod fourteen times, I think, and he always struggled to get away. Once, on the summit of the Rocky Mountains, we had to throw Dave and tie him hard and fast before we could shoe him. It takes two shoes to one foot for an ox, instead of one as for a horse, though the fastening is the same; that is, by nailing into the hoof. At one time Dandy's hoofs became so worn that I could not fasten a shoe on him, and so I had what we called leather boots put on, that left a track like an elephant's; but he could not pull well with them on.

Besides the oxen we had a dog, Jim. More will be told of him later.

An authentic prairie schooner, a true veteran of the Plains, was out of the question; but in building a new one for the trip, I made use of parts of three old wagons. The woodwork of the wagon had to be new throughout except for one hub, which had done service across the Plains in 1853. This hub

and the bands, boxes, and other iron parts were from two old-time wagons that had crossed the Plains in 1853. They differed somewhat in size and shape; hence the hubs of the fore and hind wheels did not match.

The axles were of wood, with the old-time linchpins and steel skeins, which called for the use of tar and the tar bucket instead of axle grease. Why? Because if grease was used, the spokes would work loose, and soon the whole wheel would collapse. The bed was of the old prairie-schooner style, with the bottom boat-shaped and the ribs on the outside.

My first camp for the return journey over the old trail was made in my own dooryard at Puyallup. This was maintained for several days to give the wagon and team a trial. After the weak points had been strengthened and everything pronounced to be in order, I left home for the long trip.

The first drive was to Seattle through the towns of Sumner, Auburn, and Kent. In Seattle I had a host of friends and acquaintances, and I thought that there I could arouse interest in my plan and secure some aid for it. Nothing came of the effort. My closest friends, on the contrary, tried to dissuade me from going; and, I may say, actually tried to convince others that it would be an act of friendship not to lend any aid to the enterprise. I knew, or thought I knew, that my strength would warrant undertaking the ordeal; I felt sure I could make the trip successfully. But my friends remained unconvinced; so after spending two weeks in Seattle I

shipped my outfit by steamer to Tacoma, only to meet the same spirit there.

One pleasant incident broke the monotony. Henry Hewitt, of Tacoma, drove up alongside my team and said, "Meeker, if you get broke out there on the Plains, just telegraph me for money to come back on."

"No," I said, "I'd rather hear you say to telegraph for money to go on with."

"All right," came the response, "have it that way, then."

Henry drove off, perhaps not giving the conversation a second thought until he received my telegram two months later, telling him that I had lost an ox and wanted him to send me two hundred dollars. The money was immediately wired to me.

Somehow no serious thought of turning back ever entered my mind. When I had once resolved to make the trip, nothing but utter physical disability could deter me. I felt on this point just as I did when I first crossed the Plains in 1852.

From Tacoma I shipped again by steamer to Olympia. The end of the old trail is but two miles distant from Olympia at Tumwater, the extreme southern point of Puget Sound. Here the first American party of homeseekers to Washington rested and settled in 1845. At this point I set a post, and afterward arranged for a stone to be placed to mark the spot.

The twenty-first of February was a red-letter day. At Tenino I had the satisfaction of helping to dedicate the first real monument erected to mark the old

trail. The stores were closed, and the school children in a body came over to the dedication. The monument was donated by the Tenino Quarry Company; it is inscribed "Old Oregon Trail: 1843-57."

At Chehalis, Washington, the Commercial Club undertook to erect and dedicate a monument to John R. Jackson, the first American citizen to settle north of the Columbia River. He was the man who had let me have a wagon in which to move my goods and my family from our first cabin on the Columbia to a new one near Puget Sound. His daughter indicated the spot where the monument should be erected, and a post was planted.

At Toledo, the place where the pioneers left the Cowlitz River on the trail to the Sound, another marker was placed by the citizens.

From Toledo I shipped the whole outfit by steamer down the Cowlitz River, and took passage with my assistants to Portland, thus reversing the order of travel in 1853. We used steam instead of the brawn of stalwart pioneers and Indians to propel the boat. On the evening of March the first I pitched my tent in the heart of the city of Portland, on a grassy vacant lot.

On the morning of the tenth of March I took steamer with my outfit, bound up the Columbia for The Dalles. How wondrous the change! Fifty-four years before, I had come floating down this same stream in a flatboat with a party of poor, heartsick pioneers; now I made the trip enjoying cushioned chairs, delicious foods, fine linens, magazines, and books — every luxury of civilized life.



Shipping on the Columbia in the twentieth century.

That night I arrived at The Dalles and drove nearly three quarters of a mile to a camping ground near the park. The streets were muddy; and the cattle were impatient and walked very fast, which made it necessary for me to tramp through the mud at their heads. We had no supper or even tea, as we did not build a fire. It was clear that night, but raining in the morning.

At The Dalles I found a monument already inscribed and in place, waiting for me to deliver the dedicatory address.

The weather of the next day treated us to some hardships that I had missed on the first overland journey. Ice formed in the camp half an inch thick, and the high wind joined forces with the damper of our stove, which had got out of order, to fill the tent with smoke and make life miserable.

The fierce, cold wind also made it necessary to postpone the dedication for a day and finally to carry it out with less ceremony than had been planned. Nevertheless, I felt that the expedition was now fairly started. We had reached the point where the real journey would begin, and the interest shown in the plan by the towns along the way had been most encouraging.



The first boulder marked on the old trail, near The Dalles of the Columbia. The first real monument was erected at Tenino.



Mount Hood as seen from The Dalles.

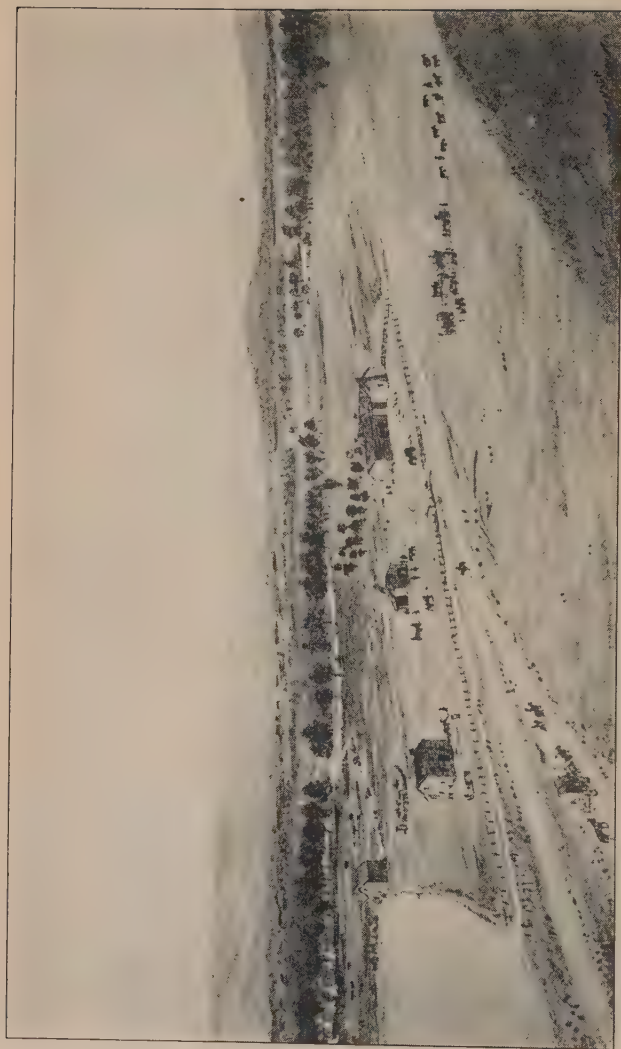
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ON THE OREGON TRAIL AGAIN

IT was the fourteenth of March when I drove out of The Dalles to make the long overland journey. By rail it is 1734 miles from The Dalles to Omaha, the route I had chosen for my eastward trip. By wagon road the distance is greater, but not much greater — probably 1800 miles.

The load was very heavy, and so were the roads. With a team untrained to the road and one of the oxen unbroken, with no experienced ox driver to assist me, and steep grades to climb, small wonder if a feeling of depression crept over me. On some long hills we could move only a few rods at a time, and on level roads, with the least warm sun, the unbroken ox would poke out his tongue.

We were now passing through the great farming district of eastern Oregon. The desert over which we had dragged ourselves in those long-ago days has been largely turned into great wheat fields. As we



The Whitman Mission. Scene reconstructed by W. H. Jackson from sketches and descriptions of the 1840 period.

drew into camp one night a young man approached, driving eight harnessed horses. He told me that he had harrowed in thirty-five acres of wheat that day, and that it was just a common day's work to plow seven acres of land.

I recalled my boyhood days when father spoke approvingly if I plowed two acres a day, and when to harrow ten acres was the biggest kind of a day's work. I also recalled the time when we cut the wheat with a sickle, or maybe with a hand cradle, and threshed it out with horses on the barn floor. Sometimes we had a fanning mill, and how it would make my arms ache to turn the crank! At other times, if a stiff breeze sprang up, the wheat and chaff would be shaken loose and the chaff would be blown away. If all other means failed, two stout arms at either end of a blanket or a sheet would move the sheet as a fan to clean the wheat. Now we see the great combination harvester garner thirty acres a day, and thresh it as well and sack it ready for the mill or warehouse. There is no shocking, no stacking or housing; all in one operation the grain is made ready for market.

As we journeyed eastward, the Blue Mountains came into distant view. Half a day's brisk travel brought us well up toward the snow line. The country became less broken, the soil seemed better, the rainfall had been greater. We began to see red barns and comfortable farmhouses, still set wide apart, though, for the farms are large.

In the Walla Walla valley the scene is different. Smaller farms are the rule and orchards are to be

seen everywhere. We now passed the historic spot where the Whitman massacre occurred in 1847. Soon afterward we were in camp in the very heart of the thriving city of Walla Walla. It was near here that I had met my father when I crossed by the Natchess Pass Trail in 1854.

Another day's travel brought us to Pendleton, Oregon. Here the Commercial Club took hold with a will and provided funds for a stone monument. On the last day of March it was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies.

That evening I drove out to the Indian school on the Umatilla reservation in a fierce rainstorm to talk to the teachers and pupils about the Oregon Trail. How different was this picture of Indian life



Indian life as the pioneer travelers of 1852 saw it.

from that we had witnessed in crossing the Plains in '52! The children of the red men were now in schools being educated to become citizens of our country. When we had first met them, they were in tepees wandering over plains and mountains.

A night in the wagon without fire and with only a scant supper sent my spirits down to zero. Nor did they rise when I learned next morning that the snow had fallen eighteen inches deep in the mountains. However, with this news came a warm invitation from the authorities of the reservation to use a room they had allotted to us, with a stove, and to help ourselves to fuel. That cheered us up greatly.

There was doubt whether we could cross the Blue Mountains in all this snow. I decided to investigate; so I took the train. About midnight I was landed in the snow at Meacham, with no visible light in the hotel and no track beaten to it.

Morning confirmed the report of the storm; twenty inches of snow had fallen in the mountains.

An old mountaineer told me, "Yes, it is possible to cross, but I warn you it will be a hard job."

It was at once arranged that the second morning thereafter his team should leave Meacham on the way to meet me.

"But what about a monument, Mr. Burns?" I said. "Meacham is a historic place, with Lee's encampment in sight." (It was in 1834 that the Reverend Jason Lee had crossed the continent with Wyeth's second expedition.)

"We have no money," came the quick reply, "but we've got plenty of muscle. Send us a stone and

I'll warrant you the foundation will be built and the monument put in place."

A belated train gave opportunity to return at once to Pendleton, where an appeal for aid to provide an inscribed stone for Meacham was responded to with alacrity. The stone was ordered, and a sound night's sleep followed.

I quote from my journal :

CAMP NO. 31, *April 4, 1906.* We are now on the snow line of Blue Mountain (8 P.M.), and am writing this by our first really out-of-doors camp fire, under the spreading boughs of a friendly pine tree. We estimate we have driven twelve miles; started from the school at 7 A.M. The first three or four miles over a beautiful farming country; then we began climbing the foothills, up, up, up, four miles, reaching first snow at 3 P.M.

True to promise, the mountaineer's team met us on the way to Meacham, but not till we had reached the snow. We were axle-deep in it and had the shovel in use to clear the way, when Burns came upon us. By night we were safely encamped at Meacham, cheered by the news that the monument had arrived and could be dedicated the next day.

The summit of the mountain had not been reached, and the worst tug lay ahead of us. But casting thoughts of this from mind, all hands turned to the monument, which by eleven o'clock was in place. Twist and Dave stood near it, hitched up and ready for the start as soon as the order was given. Everybody in town was there, the little school coming in a body. After the speech we moved on to battle with the snow, and finally won our way over the summit.

The sunshine that was let into our hearts at La Grande was also refreshing. "Yes, we will have a monument," the people responded. And they got one, too, dedicating it while I tarried.

We had taken with us an inscribed stone to set up near the mouth of Ladd's Canyon, eight miles out of La Grande. The school near by came in a body. The children sang "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," after which I talked to the assemblage for a few moments, and the exercises closed with all singing "America." Each child brought a stone and cast it upon the pile surrounding the base of the monument.

The citizens of Baker City lent a willing ear to the suggestion to erect a monument on the high-school grounds, although the trail is six miles off to the north. A fine granite shaft was provided for the high-school grounds and was dedicated. A marker was also set on the trail. Eight hundred school children contributed an aggregate of sixty dollars to place a children's bronze tablet on this shaft. Two thousand people participated in the ceremony of dedication.

News of these events was now beginning to pass along the line ahead. As a result the citizens in other places began to take hold of the work with a will. Old Mount Pleasant, Durkee, Huntington, and Vale were other Oregon towns that followed the good lead and erected monuments to mark the old trail. By the time we reached the Idaho line, thirteen markers had been erected along the old Oregon Trail. A most gratifying feature of the work was the hearty participation in it of the school children.



Nooning beside the prairie schooner.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

TRAILING ON TO SOUTH PASS

THE Snake River was crossed just below the mouth of the Boise, about where, almost fifty-four years before, we had made our second crossing of the Snake.

We were landed on the historic site of old Fort Boise, established by the Hudson's Bay Company in September, 1834. This fort was established for the purpose of preventing the success of the American venture at Fort Hall, a post established earlier in 1834 by Nathaniel J. Wyeth. Wyeth's venture proved a failure, and Fort Hall soon passed to his rival, the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus for the time being the British had rule of the whole of that vast Northwest region, then known as the Oregon Country.

Some relics of the old fort at Boise were secured. Arrangements were made for planting a doubly inscribed stone to mark the trail and the site of the

fort, and afterward, through the liberality of the citizens of Boise City, a stone was erected.

At Boise, the capital of Idaho, there were nearly twelve hundred contributions to the monument fund by the pupils of the public schools. The monument stands on the State House grounds and is inscribed as the children's offering to the memory of the pioneers. More than three thousand people attended the dedication service.

The spirit of coöperation and good will toward the enterprise that was manifested at the capital city prevailed all through Idaho. From Parna, the first town we came to on the western edge, to Montpelier, near the eastern boundary, the people of Idaho seemed anxious to do their part in marking the old trail. Besides the places already named, Twin Falls, American Falls, Pocatello, and Soda Springs all



Emil Kopac

A tribute, placed by Ezra Meeker, to the pioneers who wore a trail through the South Pass.

responded to the appeal by erecting monuments to mark the old trail.

One rather exciting incident happened near Montpelier. A vicious bull attacked my ox team, first from one side and then the other. Then he got in between the oxen and caused them nearly to upset the wagon. I was thrown down in the mix-up, but fortunately escaped unharmed.

This incident reminded me of a scrape one of our neighboring trains got into on the Platte in 1852, with a wounded buffalo. The train had encountered a large herd of these animals, feeding and traveling at right angles to the road. The older heads of the party, fearing a stampede of their teams, had ordered the men not to molest the buffaloes, but to give their whole attention to the care of the teams. One impulsive young fellow would not be restrained; he fired into the herd and wounded a large bull. The maddened bull charged upon a wagon filled with women and children and drawn by a team of mules. He became entangled in the harness and was caught on the wagon-tongue between the mules. The air was full of excitement for a while. The women screamed, the children cried, and the men began to shout. But the practical question was how to dispatch the bull without shooting the mules as well. Trainmen forgot their own teams and rushed to the scene. Guns began to pop and the buffalo was finally killed. The wonder is that nobody was harmed.

Cokeville was the first town reached in Wyoming. It stands on Smith's Fork, near where that stream empties into Bear River. It is also at the western

*W. H. Jackson*

The marks of the old trail across Simpson's Hollow, west of South Pass.

end of the Sublette Cut-Off Trail from Bear River to Big Sandy Creek, the cut-off that we had taken in 1852.

The people of the locality resolved to have a monument at this fork in the old trail, and arrangements were made to erect one out of stone from a local quarry. This good beginning made in the state, we went on, climbing first over the rim of the Great Basin, then up and across the Rockies.

From Cokeville to Pacific Springs, just west of the summit of the Rocky Mountains at South Pass, by the road and trail we traveled, is one hundred and fifty-eight miles. Ninety miles of this stretch is away from the sound of the locomotive, the click of

*Howard R. Driggs*

Sheep herders' wagons in the sage-covered hills of Wyoming near the Oregon Trail.

the telegraph, or the voice of the "hello girl." The mountains here are from six to seven thousand feet above sea level, with scanty vegetable growth. The country is still almost a solitude, save as here and there a sheep herder or his wagon may be discerned. The sly coyote, the simple antelope, and the cunning sage hen still hold sway as they did when I first traversed the country. The old trail is there in all its grandeur.

"Why mark that trail!" I exclaimed. Miles and miles of it are worn so deep that centuries of storm will not efface it; generations may pass and the origin of the trail may become a legend, but these marks will remain for the wondering eyes of those who people the continent centuries hence — aye, a hundred centuries hence, I am ready to say.

We wondered to see the trail worn fifty feet wide

and three feet deep, and we hastened to photograph it. But after we were over the crest of the mountain, we saw it a hundred feet wide and fifteen feet deep. The tramp of thousands upon thousands of men and women, the hoofs of millions of animals, and the wheels of untold numbers of vehicles had loosened the soil, and the fierce winds had carried it away. In one place we found ruts worn a foot deep into the solid rock.

The mountain region was as wild as it had been when I first saw it. One day, while we were still west of the Rocky Mountains, in Wyoming, two antelope crossed the road about a hundred yards ahead of us, a buck and a doe. The doe soon disappeared, but the buck came near the road and stood gazing at us in wonderment, as if to ask, "Who the mischief are you?"

Our dog Jim soon scented him, and away they went up the mountain side until Jim got tired and came back to the wagon. Then the antelope stopped on a little eminence on the mountain, and for a long distance we could see him plainly against a background of sky.

At another time we actually got near enough to get a shot with our kodaks at two antelope; but they were too far off to make good pictures. Our road was leading us obliquely up a gentle hill, gradually approaching nearer to one of the antelope. I noticed that he would come toward us for a while and then turn around and look the other way for a while. Then we saw what at first we took to be a kid, or young antelope; but soon we discovered that

it was a coyote, prowling on the track of the antelope and watching both of us. Just after the wagon had stopped, I saw six big, fat sage hens feeding not more than twice the length of the wagon away, just as I had seen them in 1852.

The dog Jim had several adventures with animals on the way. First of all, he and Dave did not get along very well. Once Dave caught Jim under the ribs with his right horn, which was bent forward and stood out nearly straight, and tossed him over some sagebrush near by. Sometimes, if the yoke prevented him from getting a chance at Jim with his horn, he would throw out his nose and snort, just like a horse that has been running at play and stops for a moment's rest. But Jim would manage to get even with him. Sometimes we put loose hay under the wagon to keep it out of the storm, and Jim would make a bed on it. Then woe betide Dave if he tried to get any of that hay! I saw Jim one day catch the ox by the nose and draw blood. You may readily imagine that after that the war was renewed between them with greater rancor than ever. Jim and Dave never did become friends.



Jim, the dog that made the journey from Washington to Washington.

One day Jim got his foot under the wheel of our wagon, and I was sure it was broken, but it was not; yet he nursed it for a week by riding in the wagon. He never

*Emil Kopac*

Where the feet and wheels of a great migration left deep marks on a sandstone ledge near Splitrock.

liked to ride in the wagon except during a thunderstorm. Once a sharp clap of thunder frightened Jim so that he jumped from the ground clear into the wagon while it was in motion and landed at my feet. How in the world he could do it I never could tell.

Jim had other exciting experiences with wild animals, too. He was always chasing birds, jack rabbits, squirrels, or anything in the world that could get into motion. One day a coyote crossed the road just a few rods behind the wagon, and Jim took after him. It looked as if Jim would overtake him, and, being dubious of the result of a tussle between them, I called Jim back. No sooner had he turned than the coyote turned, too, and made chase, and there they came, nip and tuck, to see who could run the faster. I think the coyote could, but he did not catch

up with Jim until they got so near the wagon that he became frightened and scampered away up the slope of a hill.

At another time a young coyote came along, and Jim played with him a while. But by and by the little fellow snapped at Jim and made Jim angry, and he bounced on the coyote and gave him a good trouncing.

Before we sheared him, Jim would get very warm when the weather was hot. Whenever the wagon stopped he would dig off the hot top earth or sand to have a cool bed to lie in; but he was always ready to go when the wagon started.

I quote again from my journal:

PACIFIC SPRINGS, WYOMING, CAMP No. 79, *June 20, 1906.* Odometer, 958. [Miles registered from The Dalles, Oregon.] Arrived at 6 P.M., and camped near Halter's store and the post office. Ice formed in camp during the night.

On June 22 we were still camped at Pacific Springs. I had searched for a suitable stone for a monument to be placed on the summit of the range, and, after almost despairing of finding one, had come upon exactly what was wanted. The stone lay alone on the mountain side; it is granite, I think, but mixed with quartz, and is a monument hewed by the hand of Nature.

Immediately after dinner we hitched the oxen to Mr. Halter's wagon. With the help of four men we loaded the stone, after having dragged it on the ground and over the rocks a hundred yards or so down the mountain side. We estimated its weight at a thousand pounds.

There being no stonecutter at Pacific Springs to inscribe the monument, the clerk at the store formed the letters on stiff pasteboard. He then cut them out to make a paper stencil, through which the shape of the letters was transferred to the stone by crayon marks. The letters were then cut out with a cold chisel, deep enough to make a permanent inscription. The stone was so hard that it required steady work all day to cut the twenty letters and figures: **THE OREGON TRAIL, 1843-57.**

We drove out of Pacific Springs at a little after noon and stopped at the summit to dedicate the monument. Then we left the summit and drove twelve miles to the point called Oregon Slough, where we put up the tent after dark.

*L. Palenske*

The old trail through the South Pass. The present highway shows along the extreme right of the trail. In the distance are the Wind River Mountains.



Howard R. Driggs

The Sweetwater.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

MEMORIES OF THE TRAIL

THE sight of Sweetwater River, twenty miles out from South Pass, revived many pleasant memories and some that were sad. I could remember the sparkling, clear water, the green skirt of undergrowth along the banks, and the restful camps that we had known along the stream so many years ago. And now I saw the same channel, the same hills, and apparently the same water swiftly passing. But where were the camp fires? Where was the herd of gaunt cattle? Where the sound of the din of bells? the hallooing for lost children or their merry voices at play? or the little groups off on the hillside to bury the dead? All were gone.

An oppressive silence prevailed as we drove to the river and pitched our camp within a few feet of the

bank, where we could hear the rippling waters passing and see the fish leaping in the eddies. We had our choice of a camping place, and selected one just by the skirt of a refreshing green brush with an opening to give full view of the river. It had not been so fifty-four years before, with hundreds of camps along the old stream. The traveler then had to take what he could get, and in many cases that was a place far back from the water and removed from other conveniences.

The sight and smell of carrion, so common in camping places during that first journey, also were gone. No bleached bones, even, showed where exhausted dumb brutes had died. The graves of the dead pioneers had all been leveled by the hoofs of stock and the lapse of time.

The country remains as it was in '52. Here the trail is to be seen miles and miles ahead, worn bare and deep. Vegetation has not yet recovered the path from the scourge of passing hoofs and tires of wagons of years ago. There is now, however, but one narrow track where there used to be a dozen.

On June 30, at about ten o'clock, we encountered a large number of big flies that ran the cattle nearly wild. I stood on the wagon tongue for miles to reach them with the whipstock. The cattle were so excited that we did not stop at noon, but drove on. By half-past two we camped at a farmhouse, the Splitrock post office, the first we had found in the hundred miles we had traveled since leaving Pacific Springs.



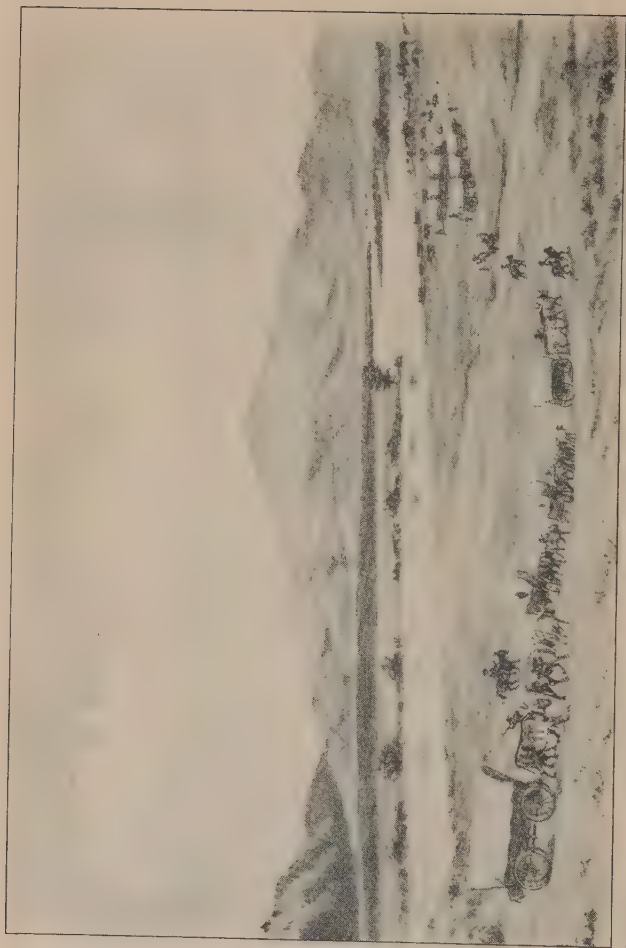
Devil's Gate on the Sweetwater, near Independence Rock, in the days of the pioneer migrations. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

*W. H. Jackson*

Splitrock Mountain on the Sweetwater, about twenty miles west of Independence Rock.

The Devil's Gate, a few miles distant, is one of the two best-known landmarks on the trail. Here, as at Splitrock, the mountain seems to have been split apart, leaving an opening a few rods wide, through which the Sweetwater River pours in a veritable torrent. The river first approaches to within a few hundred feet of the gap, then suddenly curves away from it, and after winding through the valley for half a mile or so, a quarter of a mile away, it takes a straight shoot and makes the plunge through the canyon. Those who have had the impression that the emigrants drove their teams through this gap are mistaken, for it's a feat no mortal man has done or can do.

This year, on my 1906 trip, I did clamber through on the left bank, over boulders head high, under shelving rocks. I ate some ripe gooseberries from the bushes growing on the border of the river, and plucked some beautiful wild roses, wondering the



The Oregon Trail at Red Buttes along the North Platte. Painting by W. H. Jackson.

while why those wild roses grew where nobody would see them.

The gap through the mountains looked familiar as I spied it from the distance, but the roadbed to the right I had forgotten. I longed to see this place; for here, somewhere under the sands, lies all that was mortal of my brother, Clark Meeker, drowned in the Sweetwater in 1854.

Independence Rock is another famous landmark along the trail. We drove over to the Rock, a distance of six miles from the Devil's Gate, and camped at ten o'clock for the day. This famous granite pile covers about thirty acres. We groped our way among the inscriptions, to find some of them nearly obliterated and many legible only in part. We walked all the way around the stone, nearly a mile. The huge rock is of irregular shape, and it is more than a hundred feet high, the walls being so precipitous that ascent to the top is possible in only two places.

Unfortunately, we could not find Frémont's inscription. Of this inscription Frémont writes in his journal of the year 1842:

August 23. Yesterday evening we reached our encampment at Rock Independence, where I took some astronomical observations. Here, not unmindful of the custom of early travelers and explorers in our country, I engraved on this rock of the Far West a symbol of the Christian faith. Among the thickly inscribed names, I made on the hard granite the impression of a large cross. It stands amidst the names of many who have long since found their way to the grave and for whom the huge rock is a giant gravestone.



Registration Cliff near Guernsey, Wyoming. Many covered-left their names

On Independence Day, 1906, we left Independence Rock. Our noon stop was on Fish Creek, eleven miles away. The next night we camped on the North Platte River. Fifty-four years before, I had left the old stream about fifteen miles below here on my way to the West.

I awoke to the fact that I was on the spot near where I had camped fifty-four years ago in this same Platte valley, then almost a desert. Now what do I see as we draw into camp? Two mowing machines cutting the alfalfa, two or more teams raking the cured hay to the rick, and a huge fork or rake at intervals climbing the steep incline of fenders to above the top of the rick and depositing on it the equivalent of a

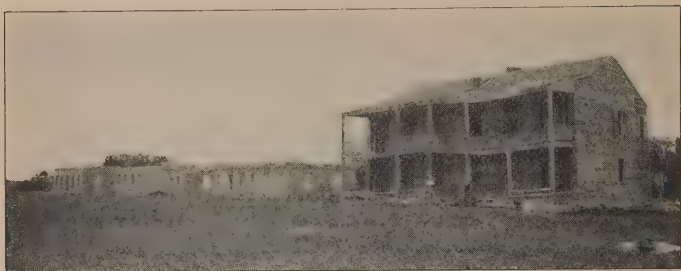
*L. Palenske*

wagon trains passed this huge rock, and many of the travelers on the cliff.

wagonload at a time. To my right, as we drove through the gate, the large garden looked temptingly near, as did some rows of small fruit. Hayricks dotted the field, and there were outhouses, barns, and dwellings. We are in the midst of plenty, and are the guests, we may almost say, of friends, instead of feeling we must deposit the trusted rifle in a convenient place while we eat. Yes, we exclaim again, "What wondrous changes time has wrought!"

At Casper, Glen Rock, and Douglas the people were hospitable and interested. Before we left, movements were on foot in all these towns to erect monuments, and they were in place before very long.

Fort Laramie brings a flood of reminiscences to

*L. Palenske*

Part of old Fort Laramie as Mr. Meeker saw it in 1906.

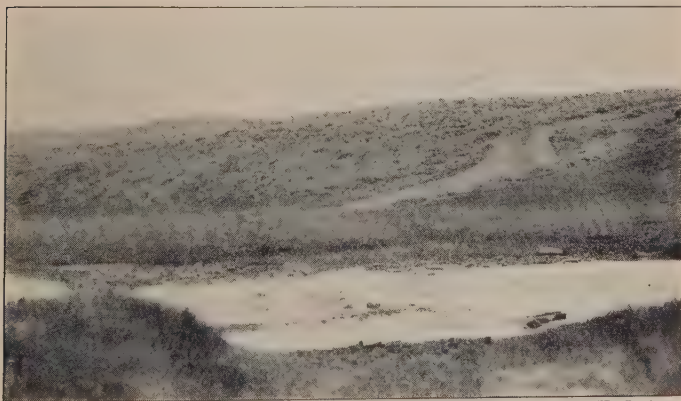
the western pioneer and his children. This old post, first a fur traders' stockade, then in 1849 a soldiers' encampment, stood at the end of the lower Black Hills and at the edge of the Plains. Here the Laramie River and the Platte meet.

The fort was a halfway station on the trail. From the time we crossed the Missouri in May, 1852, until we reached the old fort, no place name was so constantly in the minds of the emigrants as that of Fort Laramie. Here, in '52, we eagerly looked for letters that never came. Perhaps our friends and relatives had not written; perhaps they had written, but the letters were lost or sidetracked somewhere in "the States." As for hearing from home, now all hope vanished. We should have to wait patiently until the long journey should end; then a missive might reach us by way of the Isthmus, or maybe by sailing vessel around Cape Horn.

There is no vestige of the old traders' camp or the first United States fort left. The new fort — not a fort, but an encampment — covers a space of thirty or forty acres, with all sorts of buildings and ruins.

One of the old barracks, three hundred feet long, was in good preservation in 1906, being utilized by the owner, Joseph Wilde, for a store, post office, hotel, and residence. The guard house with its grim iron door and twenty-inch concrete walls is also fairly well preserved. One frame building of two stories, we were told, was transported by ox team from Kansas City at a cost of one hundred dollars a ton. The old place is crumbling away, slowly disappearing with the memories of the past.

From Fort Laramie onward into western Nebraska we passed through a succession of thriving cities. The Platte has been turned to splendid service through the process of irrigation. Great canals lead its life-giving waters out to the thirsty plains that now "blossom as the rose." Rich fields of grain and hay and beets cover the valley. Great sugar factories, railroads, business blocks, and fine

*W. H. Jackson*

The old trail just beyond the crossing of Rock Creek, in Fremont County, Wyoming.



Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, one of the famous landmarks tell of the prosperity that has leaped out of the parched plains we trailed across.

Scotts Bluff, however, is one of the old landmarks that has not changed. It still looms up as of old on the south side of the river about eight hundred feet above the trail. The origin of the name, Scotts Bluff, is not definitely known. Tradition says: "A trapper named Scott, while returning to the States, was robbed and stripped by the Indians. He crawled to these bluffs and there famished. His bones were afterward found and buried." These quoted words were written by a passing emigrant on the spot, June 11, 1852. Another version of the tale is that Scott fell sick and was abandoned by his traveling companions. After having crawled almost

*L. Palenske*

marks along the old trail, now a national monument.

forty miles, he finally died near the bluff that bears his name. This occurred prior to 1830.

From the bluff we drove as directly as possible to a historic grave, two miles out from the town and on the railroad right of way. In this grave lies a pioneer mother who died August 15, 1852, nearly six weeks after I had passed over the ground. Some thoughtful friend had marked her grave by standing a wagon tire upright in it. But for this, the grave, like thousands and thousands of others, would have passed out of sight and mind.

The tire bore this simple inscription: "Rebecca Winters, aged 50 years." The hoofs of stock had tramped the sunken grave and trod it into dust, but the arch of the tire remained to defy the

strength of thoughtless hands that would have removed it.

Finally the railroad surveyors came along. They might have run the track over the lonely grave but for the thoughtfulness of the man who wielded the compass. He changed the line, that the resting place of the pioneer mother should not be disturbed, and the grave was protected and enclosed.

The railroad officials did more. They telegraphed word of the finding of this grave to their representative in Salt Lake City. He gave the story to the press; the descendants of the pioneer mother read it, and they provided a monument, lovingly inscribed, to mark the spot.

As I looked upon this grave, now surrounded by green fields and happy homes, my mind ran back to the time it was first occupied in the desert — as all believed the country through which we were passing to be — and the awful calamity that overtook so many and carried them to their untimely and unknown graves.

About twenty miles from Scotts Bluff stands old Chimney Rock. It is a curious freak of nature, and a famous landmark on the trail. It covers perhaps twelve acres, and rises coneshaped for two hundred feet to the base of the spire-like rock, the "chimney," that rests upon it and rises a full hundred feet more.



Howard R. Driggs

The Missouri River from a point south of Omaha, about where the Meeker party first crossed the river in 1852.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

A BIT OF BAD LUCK

ONCE more I will let my journal tell the story :

OLD OREGON TRAIL MONUMENT EXPEDITION, BRADY ISLAND, NEBRASKA, CAMP NO. 120, *August 9, 1906.* Odometer, 1536 $\frac{5}{8}$. Yesterday morning Twist ate his breakfast as usual and showed no signs of sickness until we were on the road two or three miles, when he began to put his tongue out and his breathing became heavy. But he leaned on the yoke more heavily than usual and determined to pull the whole load. I finally stopped, put him on the off side, gave him the long end of the yoke, and tied his head back with the halter strap to the chain; but to no purpose, for he pulled by the head very heavily. I finally unyoked, gave him a quart of lard, a gill of vinegar, and a handful of sugar, but all to no purpose, for he soon fell down and in two hours was dead.

Such is my record of this noble animal's death. I think he died from eating some poisonous plant.

When we started, Twist weighed 1470 pounds. After we had crossed two ranges of mountains, had wallowed in the snows of the Blue Mountains, followed the tortuous, rocky canyon of Burnt River, and gone through the deep sands of the Snake, this ox had gained 137 pounds, and weighed 1607 pounds. While laboring under the short end of the yoke that gave him fifty-five per cent of the draft and an increased burden, he would keep his end of the yoke a little ahead, no matter how much the mate might be urged to keep up.

There are pronounced individualities in animals as well as in men. I might have said virtues, too — and why not? If an animal always does his duty and is faithful and industrious, why not recognize this character, even if he is “nothing but an ox”?

To understand the achievements of this ox it is necessary to know the burden that he carried. The wagon weighed 1430 pounds, had wooden axles and wide track, and carried an average load of 800 pounds. Along with an unbroken four-year-old steer, a natural-born shirk, Twist had hauled the wagon 1776 miles, and he was in better working trim just before he died than when the trip began. And yet, am I sure that at some points I did not abuse him? What about coming up out of Little Canyon, or rather up the steep, rocky steps of stones like stairs, when I used the goad, and he pulled a shoe off his feet? Was I merciful then, or did I exact more than I ought?

I can see him yet, in my mind, on his knees, holding the wagon from rolling into the canyon till the wheel could be blocked and the brakes set. Then,

when bidden to start the load, he did not flinch. He was the best ox I ever saw, without exception, and his loss nearly broke up the expedition. His like I could not find again. He had a decent burial. A headboard marks his grave and tells of the aid he rendered in this expedition to perpetuate the memory of the old Oregon Trail.

What should I do — abandon the work? No. But I could not go on with one ox. So a horse team was hired to take us to the next town, Gothenburg, thirteen miles away. The ox was led behind the wagon.

Again I hired a horse team to haul the wagon to Lexington. At Lexington I thought the loss of the ox could be repaired by buying a pair of heavy cows and breaking them in to work, so I purchased two out of a band of two hundred cattle.

“Why, yes, of course they will work,” I said, in reply to a bystander’s question. “I have seen whole teams of cows on the Plains in ’52. Yes, we will soon have a team,” I declared with all the confidence in the world, “only we can’t go very far in a day with a raw team, especially in this hot weather.”

But one cow would not go at all! We could neither lead her nor drive her. Put her in the yoke, and she would stand stock still, just like a stubborn mule. Hitch the yoke by a strong rope behind the wagon with a horse team to pull, and she would brace her feet and actually slide along, but would not lift a foot. I never saw such a brute before, and hope I never shall again. I have broken wild, fighting, kicking steers to the yoke and enjoyed the sport, but from a sullen, tame cow, deliver me!

“Won’t you take her back and give me another?”
I asked the seller.

“Yes, I will give you that red cow” — one I had rejected as unfit — “but not one of the others.”

“What is this cow worth to you?”

“Thirty dollars.”

So I dropped ten dollars, having paid forty for the first cow. Besides, I had lost the better part of a day and experienced a good deal of vexation. If I could only have had Twist back again!

The fact gradually became apparent that the loss of that fine ox was almost irreparable. I could not get track of an ox anywhere, nor even of a steer large enough to mate the Dave ox. Besides, Dave always was a fool. Twist would watch my every motion, and mind by the wave of the hand, but Dave never minded anything except to shirk hard work. Twist seemed to love his work and would go freely all day. It was brought home to me more forcibly than ever that in the loss of the Twist ox I had almost lost the whole team.

When I drove out from Lexington behind a hired horse team that day, with the Dave ox tagging on behind and sometimes pulling on his halter, and with an unbroken cow in leading, it may easily be guessed that the pride of anticipated success died out, and deep discouragement seized upon me. I had two yokes, one a heavy ox yoke, the other a light cow’s yoke; but the cow, I thought, could not be worked alongside the ox in the ox yoke, nor the ox with the cow in the cow yoke. I was without a team, but with a double encumbrance.

Yes, the ox has passed, for in all Nebraska I was unable to find even one yoke.

I trudged along, sometimes behind the led cattle, wondering in my mind whether or not I had been foolish to undertake this expedition to perpetuate the memory of the old Oregon Trail. Had I not



Twist, a noble animal.

been rebuffed at the first by a number of business men who pushed the subject aside with, "I have no time to look into it"? Hadn't I been compelled to pass several towns where not even three persons could be found to act on the committee? And then there was the experience of the constant suspicion that there was some graft to be discovered, some lurking speculation. All this could be borne in patience; but when coupled with it came the virtual loss of the team, is it strange that my spirits went down below a normal point?

Then came the compensatory thought of what had been accomplished. Four states had responded cordially. Back along the line of more than fifteen hundred miles already stood many sentinels, mostly granite, to mark the trail and keep alive the memory of the pioneers. Moreover, I recalled the enthusiastic reception in so many places, the outpouring of contributions from thousands of school children, the willing hands of the people that built these monuments, and the more than twenty thousand people

attending the dedication ceremonies. These heartening recollections made me forget the loss of Twist, the recalcitrant cow, and the dilemma that confronted me. I awakened from my reverie in a more cheerful mood. "Do the best you can," I said to myself, "and don't be cast down. My spirits rose almost to the point of exultation again.

We soon reached the beautiful city of Kearney, named after old Fort Kearny, which stood across the river, and were given a fine camping place in the center of the town. It was under the shade trees that line the streets, and we had a fresh-cut green-sward upon which to pitch our tents. People came in great numbers to visit the camp and express their appreciation of our enterprise. Later a monument was erected in this city.

At Grand Island I found public sentiment in favor of taking action. It was decided, however, that the best time for the dedication would be the next year, upon the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the settlement. I was a little disappointed in the delay, but felt that good seed was sown.

Grand Island, with its stately rows of shade trees, its modest, tasteful homes, the bustle and stir on its business streets, with the constant passing of trains, shrieking of whistles, and ringing of bells, presented a striking contrast to the scene I saw that June day in 1852 when I passed over the ground near where the city stands. Vast herds of buffalo then grazed on the hills or calmly crossed our track and at times obstructed our way, and herds of antelope watched from vantage points.

But now the buffalo and the antelope have disappeared; the Indian likewise is gone. Instead of the parched plain of 1852, with its fierce clouds of dust rolling up the valley and engulfing whole trains, we saw a landscape of smiling, fruitful fields, inviting groves of trees, and contented homes.

From Grand Island I went to Fremont, Nebraska, to head the procession in the semi-centennial celebration in honor of the founding of that city. In the procession I worked the ox and the cow together. From Fremont I went on to Lincoln and from there on to Omaha, where in 1852 I had crossed the old Missouri on my way to Oregon.

All the while I was searching for an ox or a steer large enough to mate the Dave ox, but without avail. Finally, after looking over a thousand head of cattle in the stockyards of Omaha, I found a five-year-old steer, Dandy, which I broke in on the way to Indianapolis. This ox proved to be very satisfactory. He never kicked or hooked, and was always in good humor. Dave and Dandy made good team-mates.





In Wall Street, New York City.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

ON TO THE CAPITAL

AFTER passing the Missouri and leaving the trail behind me, I somehow had a foreboding that I might be mistaken for a faker and looked upon as an adventurer, and I shrank from the ordeal. My hair had grown long on the trip across, my boots were somewhat the worse for wear, and my old-fashioned clothes (understood well enough by pioneers along the trail) were dilapidated. I was not the most presentable specimen for every sort of company. Already I had been compelled to say that I was not a "corn doctor" or any kind of doctor, that I did not have patent medicine to sell, and that I was not soliciting contributions to support the expedition.

The first of March, 1907, found me on the road going eastward from Indianapolis. I had made up my mind that Washington should be the objective point. For my main purpose — to secure the building of a memorial highway — Congress, I felt, would be a better field to work in than out on the hopelessly

long stretch of the trail, where one man's span of life would certainly pass before the work could be accomplished. But I thought it well to make a campaign of education to get the work before the general public so that Congress might know about it. Therefore a route was laid out to occupy the time until the first of December, just before Congress would again assemble. The route lay through Indianapolis, Dayton, Columbus, Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, to Washington.

For the most part I received a warm welcome all along the route. Dayton treated me generously. Mayor Badger of Columbus wrote giving me the freedom of the city; and Mayor Tom Johnson wrote to his chief of police to "treat Mr. Meeker as the guest of the city of Cleveland," which was done.

At Buffalo a benefit performance for one of the hospitals, in the shape of a circus, was in preparation. A part of the elaborate program was an attack by Indians on an emigrant train, the "Indians" being representative young men of the city. At this juncture I arrived in the city and was besought to go and represent the train, for which they would pay me.

"No, not for pay," I said, "but I will go."

So there was quite a realistic show in the ring that afternoon and evening, and the hospital received more than a thousand dollars' benefit.

Near Oneida someone said that I had better take to the towpath on the canal to save distance and to avoid going over the hill. It was against the law, he added, but everybody did it and no one would

object. So, when we came to the forks of the road, I followed the best-beaten track and was soon traveling along on the level, hard, but narrow way, the towpath. All went well that day.

We were not so fortunate the next day, however, when a boat with three men, two women, and three long-eared mules was squarely met, the mules being on the towpath. The mules took fright, got into a regular mix-up, broke the harness, and went up the towpath at a two-forty gait.

As I had walked into Oneida the night before, I did not see the sight or hear the war of words that followed. The men ordered Marden to "take that outfit off the towpath." He answered that he could not do it without upsetting the wagon. The men said if he couldn't they would do it quickly enough. They started toward the wagon, evidently intent upon executing their threat, meanwhile swearing at the top of their voices while the women scolded in chorus, one of them fairly shrieking.

My old muzzle-loading rifle that we had carried across the Plains lay handy. When the men started toward him, Marden picked up the rifle to show fight and called on the dog Jim to take hold of the men. As he raised the gun to use it as a club, one of the boatmen threw up his hands, bawling at the top of his voice, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" He forgot to mix in oaths and slunk out of sight behind the wagon. The others also drew back. Jim showed his teeth, and a truce followed. With but little inconvenience the mules were taken off the path, and the ox team was driven past.

The fun of it was that the gun that had spread such consternation hadn't been loaded for more than twenty-five years. The sight of it alone was enough for the three stalwart braves of the canal.

It took New York to cap the climax — to bring me all sorts of experiences, sometimes with the police, sometimes with the gaping crowds, and sometimes at the City Hall.

The mayor was not in the city when I arrived; but the acting mayor said that while he could not grant me a permit to come in, he would have the police commissioner instruct his men not to molest me. Either the instructions were not general enough, or else the men paid no attention; for when I got down as far as 161st Street on Amsterdam Avenue, a policeman interfered and ordered my driver to take the team to the police station, which he very properly refused to do.

It was after dark and I had just gone around the corner to engage quarters for the night when this occurred. Returning, I saw the young policeman attempt to move the team, but as he didn't know how, the oxen wouldn't budge a peg, whereupon he arrested my driver and took him away.

Another policeman tried to coax me to drive the team down to the police station. I said, "No, sir, I will not." He couldn't drive the team to the station, and I wouldn't, and so there we were. To arrest me would make matters worse, for the team would be left on the street without anyone to care for it. Finally the officer got out of the way, and I drove the team to the stable. He followed, with a large

crowd tagging after him. Soon the captain of the precinct arrived, called his man off, and ordered my driver released.

It appeared that there was an ordinance against allowing cattle to be driven on the streets of New York. Of course, this was intended to apply to loose cattle, but the policemen interpreted it to mean any cattle, and they had the clubs to enforce their interpretation. I was in the city and couldn't get out without subjecting myself to arrest, according to their view of the law; and in fact I didn't want to get out. I wanted to drive down Broadway from one end to the other, and I did, a month later.

All hands said nothing short of an ordinance by the board of aldermen would clear the way; so I tackled the aldermen. The *New York Tribune* sent a man over to the City Hall to intercede for me; the *New York Herald* did the same thing. And so it came about that the aldermen passed an ordinance granting me the right of way for thirty days, and also endorsed my work. I thought my trouble was over when that ordinance was passed. Not so; the mayor was absent, and the acting mayor could not sign an ordinance until after ten days had elapsed. The city attorney came in and said the aldermen had exceeded their authority, as they could not legally grant a special privilege.

Then the acting mayor said he would not sign the ordinance; but if I would wait until the next meeting of the aldermen, if they did not rescind the ordinance, it would be certified, as he would not veto it. Considering that no one was likely to test the legality

of the ordinance, he thought I would be safe in acting as though it were legal. Just thirty days from the time I had the bother with the policemen, and having incurred two hundred and fifty dollars of extra expense, I drove down Broadway from 161st Street to the Battery without getting into any serious scrape, except with one automobilist who became angered but afterward was "as good as pie."

Thirty days satisfied me with New York. The crowds were so great that congestion of traffic always followed my presence, and I would be compelled to move. One day when I went to City Hall Park to have my team photographed with the Greeley statue, I got away only by the help of the police, and even then with great difficulty.

A trip across Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn was also made, and then, two days before leaving the city, I came near to meeting a heavy loss. Somehow I got sandwiched in on the East Side of New York in the congested district of the foreign quarter and at night-fall drove into a stable, put the oxen in the stalls and, as usual, the dog Jim in the wagon. The next morning Jim was gone. The stableman said he had left the wagon a few moments after I had and had been stolen. The police accused the stablemen of being parties to the theft, in which I think they were right.

Money could not buy that dog. He was an integral part of the expedition — always on the alert, always watchful of the wagon during my absence, and always willing to mind what I bade him do. He had had more adventures on this trip than any

other member of the outfit. First he was tossed over a high brush by the ox Dave; then, shortly after, he was pitched headlong over a barbed-wire fence by an irate cow. Next came a fight with a wolf; following this, came a narrow escape from a rattlesnake in the road. Also, a trolley car ran on to him, rolling him over and over again until he came out as dizzy as a drunken man. I thought he was a "goner" that time for sure, but he soon straightened up. Finally, in the streets of Kansas City, he was run over by a heavy truck while fighting with another dog. The other dog was killed outright, while Jim came near to having his neck broken. He lost one of his best fighting teeth and had several others broken. I sent him to a veterinary surgeon, and curiously enough he made no protest while having the broken teeth repaired or extracted.

There was no other way to find Jim than to offer a reward. I did this, and feel sure I paid twenty dollars to one of the parties to the theft. The fellow was brazen enough, also, to demand pay for keeping him. That was the time when I got up and talked pointedly.

But I had my faithful dog back, and I kept him more closely by me while I was making the rest of my tour. Six years later it chanced that I lost Jim. While we were waiting at a station, I let him out of the car for a few minutes. The train started unexpectedly and Jim was left behind. A good reward was offered for him, but nobody ever came to collect it.



Welcomed by President Roosevelt at the Capitol.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE END OF THE LONG TRAIL

I WAS glad enough to get out of the crowds of New York. It had given me some rich experiences, but that big city is no place for ox teams. It was good to get away from the jam and the hurry out on to the country roads.

On the way to Philadelphia, between Newark and Elizabeth City, New Jersey, at a point known as Lyon's Farm, the old Meeker homestead stood, built in the year 1676. Here the Meeker Tribe, as we call ourselves, came out nearly forty strong to greet me.

On the way through Maryland we saw a good many oxen, some of them driven on the road. The funny part of it was to have the owners try to trade their scrawny teams for Dave and Dandy, offering money to boot, or two yoke for one. They had never before seen such large oxen as Dave and Dandy, and for that matter I never had myself. Dandy was of unusual size, and Dave was probably the largest trained ox in the United States then; he was sixteen hands high and eight feet in girth.

I reached Washington, the capital, just twenty-two months to the day from the time I left home in Washington, the state. As soon as arrangements could be made I went to see President Roosevelt. Senator Piles and Representative Cushman, of the Washington Congressional delegation, introduced me to the President in the Cabinet room.

Mr. Roosevelt manifested a lively interest in the work of marking the trail. He did not need to be told that the trail was a battlefield, or that the Oregon pioneers who moved out and occupied the Oregon country while it was yet in dispute between Great Britain and the United States were heroes. When I suggested that they were "the winners of the Farther West," he fairly snatched these words from my lips. He went even further than I had dreamed of or hoped for in invoking government aid to carry on the work. Addressing Senator Piles, the President said: "I am in favor of this work to mark this trail. If you will bring before Congress a measure to accomplish it, I am with you and will give my support to do it thoroughly."

Mr. Roosevelt thought the suggestion of a memorial highway should first come from the states through which the trail runs. However, it would be possible to get Congressional aid to mark the trail. In any event, he felt it ought to be done speedily.

Unexpectedly the President asked, "Where is your team? I want to see it."

Upon being told that it was near by, without ceremony, and without his hat, he was soon alongside, asking questions faster than they could be answered — not idle questions, but such as showed a desire to get real information, bottom facts.

President Roosevelt was a man who loved the pioneers and who understood the true West. His warm welcome remains in my heart as one of the richest rewards of the many that have come as compensation for my struggle to carry out my dream.

On the eighth of January, 1908, I left the capital for St. Louis, my object being to retrace the old Oregon Trail from its beginning. It was at St. Louis, the western terminus of the old National Pike, that the Oregon Trail first began. From this frontier city on April 10, 1830, a covered-wagon train — the first ever to open the wagon way along the eastern end of the Oregon Trail — had left for the Rocky Mountains. This train, led by Captain Billy Sublette, who, with Jedediah Strong Smith and David Jackson, was the leader of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, carried supplies to the American trappers out in the West. It made a most successful trip, going right to the edge of old Oregon, whose eastern boundary at that time was the Rocky Moun-

tains, and returning to St. Louis six months later to a day, with \$150,000 worth of furs. But more significant than this wealth of furs, these fur traders had opened the covered-wagon way into the Far West. The trail had been blazed for settlers to follow with their wives and children.

It is true that St. Louis did not remain long the eastern terminus of the wagon trail to Oregon. Most of the later covered-wagon emigrants used the river steamboats from St. Louis to Independence, Missouri¹; later to Westport Landing (now Kansas City) or to Atchison, St. Joseph, and Nebraska City. Disembarking from the boats at these river towns, the pioneers would drive westward along one or the other of the various eastern branches of the trail. My work was directed toward rousing the people of these various places to the saving of their historical heritage, particularly as it linked with the old Oregon Trail. I met with varying success.

After a visit to Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri, where I met Governor Folk and won his approval of my work, I journeyed on to Independence. This historic city for some years was the main outfitting terminal of both the old Santa Fé and the Oregon trails. Indeed these trails are one from Independence for about forty miles to the town of Gardner, Kansas. At that town the old trails divided, the Santa Fé bearing off to the southwest, the Oregon to the northwest. At the fork of the roads the historian Chittenden says, "A simple signboard was seen which carried the words 'Road to Oregon,' thus pointing

¹ See the map on page 38 and the footnote on page 26.

the way for two thousand miles. No such sign-board ever before pointed the road for so long a distance, and probably another such never will."

I determined to make an effort to find the spot where this historic sign once stood, and if possible to plant a marker there. Friends in Kansas City, one of whom I had not met for sixty years, took me by automobile to Gardner, where, after a search of a couple of hours, two old residents were found who were able to point out the spot. These men were Mr. V. R. Ellis and Mr. William J. Ott, aged respectively seventy-seven and eighty-two years, whose residence in the near vicinity dated back nearly fifty years. The point is at the intersection of Washington and Central streets in Gardner.

My plan was to drive up the Missouri and investigate the remaining four prongs of the trail — the prongs that set out from the Missouri at Independence, Leavenworth, Atchison, and St. Joseph. I drove to Topeka, the capital city of Kansas, where I arrived the eleventh of May (1908). There the trail crosses the Kansas River under the very shadow of the State House, not three blocks away; yet only a few knew of it.

On the twenty-third of May the team arrived at St. Joseph, Missouri, a point where many pioneers had outfitted in early days. While public sentiment there was in hearty accord with the work of marking the trail, yet plainly it would be a hard tug to get the people together on a plan to erect a monument. "Times are very tight to undertake such a work," came the response from so many that no organized effort was made.

The committee of Congress in charge of the bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars to mark the trail, by this time had taken action and had made a favorable report. Such a report was held to be almost equivalent to the passage of a bill. So, all things considered, the conclusion was reached to suspend operations, ship the team home, and for the time being take a rest from the work. I had been out from home twenty-eight months, lacking but five days; hence it is small wonder that I concluded to listen to the inner longings to get back to home and home life. On the twenty-sixth of May I shipped the outfit by rail from St. Joseph to Portland, Oregon, where I arrived on the sixth day of June, 1908, and went into camp on the same grounds I had used in March, 1906, on my outward trip.

As I returned home over the Oregon Short Line I crossed the old trail in many places. This time, however, it was with Dave and Dandy quietly chewing their cuds in a box car, while I enjoyed all the luxuries of an overland train.

I began vividly to realize the wide expanse of country covered, as we passed first one and then another of the camping places. I was led to wonder whether or not I should have undertaken the work if I could have seen the trail stretched out, as I saw it like a panorama from the car window. I sometimes think not. All of us at times undertake things that look bigger after completion than they did in our vision of them. We go into ventures without fully counting the cost. Perhaps that was the case, to a certain extent, in this venture; the

work did look larger from the car window than from the camp.

Nevertheless, I had no regrets to express or exultation to proclaim. The trail was not yet fully or properly marked. We had made a good beginning, however, and had reason to believe that the work would progress. This trip resulted in the immediate or later erection of over one hundred fifty monuments to the memory of the Oregon pioneers and the trail that they blazed across the continent. Let us hope the end will soon become an accomplished fact. Monumenting the old Oregon Trail means more than the mere preservation in memory of that great highway; it means the building up of loyalty, of patriotism, as well as the teaching of our history in a form never to be forgotten.

Words cannot express my deep feeling of gratitude for the royal welcome given me by the citizens of Portland on my return. I was privileged to attend the reunion of the two thousand pioneers who had just assembled for their annual meeting.

The drive from Portland to Seattle is also one long to be remembered; my friends and neighbors met me with kindest welcome. On the eighteenth day of July, 1908, I drove into the city of Seattle and the long journey was ended. My dream of retracing the way over the Old Trail had come true.

CHAPTER THIRTY

RESTORING THE LOST TRAIL

BUT the work of restoring the Oregon Trail was unfinished. Only a beginning had been made — seed planted from which greater results might follow. There were encouraging signs that the seed had not been sown in vain.

Since 1906, when I began my first trek eastward by ox team, a great change had come over the minds of the American people. Numerous organizations had sprung into existence for the improvement of the roads and for the perpetuating of the old trails and of the memory of the pioneers who had worn them wide and deep. Even on my first trip across the continent by ox team I had secured from a Congressional committee favorable report on a bill appropriating Federal money to mark the Oregon Trail. To carry the measure through, it was necessary that public sentiment for it be kept alive and growing. It was essential also that some practical questions be definitely answered: Where did the old Oregon Trail actually run? What would it cost to mark the historic highway? Where should the markers be placed? What spots along the pioneer way should be preserved as historic shrines?

To secure historical data that would be helpful in meeting these and other practical questions sure to arise, I determined to make another trip with my ox team, not to erect markers but to chart the old trail from the Missouri River to the Pacific. Dave and

Dandy were "seasoned" now and ready to go; so on March 12, 1910, off we started again eastward to map definitely the pathway of the pioneers.

How swiftly the hand of time erases the story of the past! This thought was impressed upon me repeatedly as I traveled along over the old trail. I had imagined that nothing could efface the old way to the West, yet for hundreds and hundreds of miles it was completely obliterated. The spreading of farms and towns over the plains, the building of railroads and highways, together with the ravages of wind and rain, had in many places changed the face of the land completely.

Fortunately some records had been kept that helped in locating the trail. At the state capitals of Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas tracings of the surveys of townships through which the trail was known to have run were obtained. The surveyors had noted all trails or roads crossing the section or township lines; yet in attempting to put these together to get a complete map of the trail I found a puzzling problem. Some trails were indicated on several section lines in succession, while others would appear on one line and then not be shown again for many miles. Also, of course, it was not always known by the surveyors which was the Oregon Trail, which were later trails, which were merely buffalo and Indian trails.

The problem was met in the spirit of the pioneers, and encouraging results began to come from our efforts. If we could pick up a known point on the Oregon Trail, noted on the surveyors' maps, and

then find another known point, even though many miles distant, we had the general direction, and following this we could locate the intervening points. To make sure we were on the right track, it was necessary to discover visible marks of the old trail itself. Here the earlier settlers and sometimes the Indians gave us valuable help in retracing the parts of the trail we had charted.

This search for the "lost trail" grew more and more fascinating as the work progressed. Almost every day brought the joy of some new discovery. Once I remember finding a remnant of the historic highway running under two fences that lined a new road; the rest of the old pioneer trail had been wiped out by the grading and the plowing of the farms. Again I discovered in an undisturbed sandy stretch where the trail by actual measurement was fully fifteen feet deep and seventy-five feet wide. Through the sage-covered lands I soon learned to recognize the old trail by its countenance, as one might say. The trampling of the sage and other rough vegetation had made it take on a slightly different color from the rest of the country; the hue was unmistakable when one learned to recognize it.

Thus piece by piece the trail of the pioneers was found and charted. It took nearly two years and a half to do the work. I made a round trip over the Oregon Trail with side trips along its various branches. We went down into Texas, where we camped in the Alamo, adjoining that historic spot where David Crockett had been killed. At one time

we encountered a veritable cloudburst in the Rocky Mountains in which we nearly lost the entire outfit; I did lose almost all my books and other effects in the roaring torrent that followed the rain. In order to preserve for future generations one of the common pioneer experiences, I crossed over the Loup Fork of the Platte River, about a quarter of a mile wide, while a moving-picture camera recorded the scene. On this trip I had the great misfortune to lose Jim and never get him back. The journey was ended on August 26, 1912, at my home in Puyallup

All in all this was a more strenuous trip than the previous drive to the national capital, and from a historical point of view it was more prolific in results. At the end of the journey, during which I passed my eightieth birthday, I had plotted sixteen hundred miles of the historic highway. A map of it nearly forty feet long has been made with painstaking care. The plan was to have this map painted on the inside of a glass case, and on this to show all the markers that have been erected along the trail. Photographs of the markers now erected at various points along the trail have been made with the intent to number and display them in their proper places on the map. It is my hope that such a complete map of this most famous trail of all history may yet be made and placed on view in our national capital as part of a memorial to the pioneers.

As for Dave and Dandy, my faithful oxen, and the old prairie schooner, whose creaking axles and wheels had borne me thrice over the old trail, I determined to give them an honorable shrine, where



Preparing to cross a river. Unyoking the oxen.

they might do their part in the perpetuating of history. When the second trip was ended, the state of Washington gladly assumed the responsibility of preserving the pioneer outfit in the State Historical Building at Tacoma. Today the oxen, mounted by a skillful taxidermist, stand in the great glass case as natural as life, under the yoke and hitched to the old covered wagon they had drawn for thousands of miles along the pathway of the pioneers.

But we must not think that the great work of memorializing the old trail was done. It still was only just well begun. There were yet many historic spots along the way to preserve ; and I soon learned that finding some of these was a task quite as difficult as the charting of the trail. It was astonishing how



Taking off the wagon box.

some of the famous old landmarks had so entirely disappeared.

Fort Hall is a notable example. This old trading post, planted in 1834 by that enterprising Bostonian, Nat Wyeth, on the Snake River, about ten miles northward from Pocatello, Idaho, was for years a place of rest and refuge for the trail-weary emigrants. On the forty thousand or more acres of rich pasture lands that bordered the river, now covered mostly by the American Falls Reservoir, the travel-worn oxen could feed, while the pioneers rested to gather strength themselves for the hardest part of their journey on over lava and sage plains and deserts that stretched on toward the coast. Thousands upon thousands of pioneers like myself had paused at this



Calking the wagon box to turn it into a boat.

place; yet when I first returned to find the old post, there was seemingly not a vestige of it left.

Whatever had happened? What could have occurred to wipe out all traces of that old trading post? In 1852 I remember clearly that it stood out there, with its high walls and buildings, and about it were hundreds of abandoned wagons, piles of furniture and other articles cast aside by the emigrants to the West. The old post was not deserted until later years, yet on my return to it during my ox-team trip eastward, the place where it stood was just an expanse of native grasses. I could hardly believe my eyes.

We started an earnest search for the old fort site. It was a baffling hunt at first. No one seemed to know anything about the place. Not far away



Launching the schooner to cross the river.

from where it was supposed to stand were the remains of an old stage station, the chimney of which had been built, someone said, from adobes taken out of the walls of old Fort Hall. From another old settler came a story that explained rather satisfactorily how the rest of the abandoned post had been swept away. According to this pioneer, the Snake and Blackfoot rivers, whose junction is not far north from where the fort stood, had got on a high-water rampage one spring during the sixties, and old Fort Hall had gone down with the flood.

But there surely must be something that remained. I was certain that the site of the post could be discovered, and we went to work at the problem.

From descriptions given by one old man, whose sight had failed but whose memory was clear, we were able to locate a spot where it was thought the original Fort Hall had stood. A monument was provided by the people of Pocatello and sent out to mark the place; but the man who was employed to erect it could not get on to the actual fort site because of high water and so left the stone at the old stage station. Before the monument was finally erected, some confusion had arisen in the minds of the people as to the actual site of the old post.

I wanted to gather some more substantial evidence, so I visited the spot again with interested citizens of Pocatello. On this second exploration we had with us an Indian, Joe Rainey, who as a boy had lived with his parents near Fort Hall. Knowing the skill of the red men, I left our Indian guide to his own resources. He took a look over the meadowy stretch and then struck straight for some tall wheat grass that rose above the other grasses. At this spot he stopped and signaled to us to come on.

His quiet remark when we reached the place was, "Wheat grass grow high where white man been. Trading post stood here."

Although he had led us to the very spot previously discovered, we began eagerly to search for evidences to corroborate the red man's decision. The raised ground in rectangular form gave indication of the fort walls; but I wanted further proof. So, taking a spade we had brought, I went to one corner of the supposed fort site, where I thought the blacksmith shop might have stood, and began to dig. It

was not long before bits of charcoal, rusted nails, and bits of scrap iron began to appear. We unearthed also some fragments of early-day crockery. More than one hundred such relics, now preserved in a museum in the state of Washington, were discovered at this time. The lost Fort Hall we felt certain had been found. A movement is now on foot to mark this old pioneer post for all time.



The site of the lost Fort Hall.

L. Palenske

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

TEACHING THE STORY OF THE WESTERN PIONEERS

THREE years after my venture to chart the old trail, came the World's Fair at San Francisco — the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Here it seemed to me was another golden opportunity to keep alive the story of the conquest of our great West. Space in one of the buildings was secured for my pioneer exhibit, and thither I shipped my mounted ox team and prairie schooner. They proved a great attraction. I was kept busy for weeks telling and retelling the story of the old Oregon Trail to the hundreds that paused to look and listen.

School children and teachers seemed especially taken with the story. And it grew on me that through them was the best way to perpetuate the memory of the pioneers. What I had undertaken in their behalf after all was primarily a work of education. Why should the story of the covered-wagon days not be taught in vivid and truthful forms to the youth of our land? In them lay the hope of the cause.

Filled with this thought, I began to bend my efforts more and more toward carrying my message into the schools of our country. Beginning with my home state, I visited many schools and found the thousands of boys and girls I was privileged to meet always eager listeners to the true stories of pioneer days.

It was during this time that, one day in Seattle,

I met Howard R. Driggs, in whom I found a kindred spirit. For some years he had been working to preserve the stories of the pioneers in truthful and attractive form for the children of our country. The immediate result of our meeting and of several conferences that followed was a plan to collaborate in preparing and publishing the story of my life. Not long after this, the first edition of *Ox-Team Days on the Oregon Trail* was issued. And shortly thereafter I was back again in New York, intent on carrying forward the work of teaching the epic story of the westward march of America, not only through books but through motion pictures.

Motion pictures had just come into widespread use. Why should they not be employed in preserving and radiating to all America the tales of the pioneers who had made such marvels possible? Happily for the success of this new venture I was brought into contact with a generous-hearted American of means and vision who opened the way for launching the work of making a motion picture portraying the story of the old Oregon Trail.

Establishing myself near busy Broadway, I entered confidently into the work of creating a historical drama for the screen — one that would portray with fidelity the great story of the winning of our Farther West. For months, with the help of others, I delved into old documents, letters, and stories of the pioneers to get authentic materials to supplement my own first-hand knowledge for the building of the tale on which the motion picture might be based.

"You must have romance — a love story — in it," suggested someone.

"Romance?" I echoed. "Why, there are thousands of romances connected with the story of the Oregon Trail. The whole story is a stirring romance."

There was in this suggestion something of a challenge to my pioneering instinct. I forthwith determined to make my first venture in writing a historical novel. And even though I was more than ninety years old, I did produce a story, *Kate Mulhall*, which, whatever be its literary qualities — and I profess no skill as a writer of fiction — is at least based on facts and portrays pioneer life as I knew it from first-hand experience.

All the while that we were working to perfect our plans for the picturing of the pioneer story, other activities in behalf of the cause were being carried on. It was during this time that I had my first experience in speaking over that marvel among inventions, the radio. The emotion that I experienced on that occasion can hardly be expressed in words. To realize that my voice was being transmitted through space over our vast continent, perhaps across the ocean, was almost beyond belief. The radio, I feel, is something more than an invention; it is a revelation that offers us a clearer insight into the laws of God and His ways of guiding His children.

They gave me the title of "the world's oldest broadcaster." I was happy that the privilege had come to me of using this new and wondrous invention to spread farther the story of the pioneers.

And while I was speaking, I was moved in the spirit of good fellowship to broadcast to my audience an invitation to my hundredth-birthday dinner. Since I felt quite as hale and hearty as I had ten years before, I had full faith to round out the century of my life. I am now nearly five years closer to that birthday than I was when I issued that invitation, but it still holds good. My hope is still strong that I shall have the privilege of celebrating with my host of friends on my hundredth birthday.

It was not long after this first experience in broadcasting that I realized a hope, long cherished, of effecting a national organization to promote the cause I loved. The Pioneers of America, Incorporated, was brought into being in the spring of 1923 under authority of a charter granted by the state of New York. I was honored by being made the first president. Shortly after the launching of this new association, I made a trip into the Far West to rally support and promote the work.

One thing of moment occurred during this journey into the land of the pioneers. An interested group in Idaho, intent on raising a stately monument on the site of old Fort Hall, had taken steps to get Congress to provide for the minting of a memorial coin to be sold to raise funds for the purpose. Here, it seemed to me, was an excellent idea for the national organization and an opportunity for coöperation. So I presented the idea to the Idaho folk, who were glad to join forces with the national organization. We all "put the shoulder to the wheel" to see the memorial-coin bill through.

Returning to New York, I met with another suggestion of moment to the cause. The financier who had so generously supported me in the launching of the motion picture idea advised forming an entirely new national organization. The Pioneers of America, he felt, had too wide a scope in its purposes to be as effective as it might be. He proposed the supplanting of this organization with another with more definite, better-focused aim. The advice seemed sound, and it was accepted without protest by all who were actively participating in the movement. As a result a new organization, the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, came into being.

Let it be understood here that the thought in making this change was not to narrow the great work of honoring all the pioneers of America. That larger work is still a part of the cause; it is our aim and hope to have every historic trail west and east, north and south, properly marked, and shrines along these pioneer highways established. A part of the great plan also is to have a fitting memorial to the pioneers erected in our national capital. But as a matter of practical wisdom we realized that it is well to do one thing at a time and do it well. For this reason it was agreed to direct our efforts first to the memorialization of the old Oregon Trail and its allied branches.

This change in our plans immediately gave new impetus to the movement. Men and women of national influence began to rally to the cause. It was not long before a bill was before Congress, introduced by Representative Addison Smith of Idaho, providing for the minting of six million memorial

coins for the use of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association in furthering its historical and patriotic work.

While this bill was pending, all our efforts were bent to see the measure made into law. Encouraging assurances had been given by various members of Congress, but we wanted to make sure that we had a majority of them with us. Something to challenge the interest of the whole nation in the cause needed to be done.

An opportunity soon presented itself to stir busy

America to pay attention to the story of the pioneers. An international air meet was to be held in my old home state of Ohio, at Dayton. It chanced I was out in the Far West at the time the announcement of this event depicting the progress of the world was made. The thought flashed through my mind, Why not fly along the old Oregon Trail to this celebration? It seemed a helpful thing to do for the cause, and I took steps immediately to bring about official permission and opportunity to make the airplane trip eastward over the pathway of the pioneers.



Mr. Meeker standing near the Tacoma Museum by an old millstone that once belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company.



The ox-team pioneer of 1852 tries the airplane.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

BY AIRSHIP OVER OX-TEAM TRAILS

NEAR midnight of September 30, 1924, I took the train at Seattle for Vancouver, Washington, arriving at that city early on the morning of October 1. Here I was met by Lieutenant Oakley C. Kelly of the United States Air Service, who had orders from the War Department to convey me by airplane to Dayton, Ohio. At ten minutes after ten that morning the propeller was set going, and the deafening roar of the machinery of the airplane continued for some time, but the great winged bird did not budge an inch — “just warming up,” as Lieutenant Kelly put it.

Meanwhile I was being prepared for the flight. Cotton was put into my ears; an aviation cap with pads to protect the ears and cover the cotton was added; goggles were placed over my eyes, and into the plane I climbed, a wide strap being fastened in

front of me. Finally the machinery was "hitched up" and the airship began to move slowly forward, but soon with increased speed it was bumping along, now off the ground and again touching it as if reluctant to leave the more solid foundation of Mother Earth; but with a last bump and with its nose pointing skyward it finally rose and we were off on our twenty-five-hundred-mile journey over the old Oregon Trail.

The first sensation I had on leaving ground was that the earth was sinking away from us, not that we were mounting into space. As we rose higher and higher, the roads looked like threads; the automobiles, tiny spots; and the houses, no larger than dog kennels.

The Oregon Trail from the Missouri River to Puget Sound as traversed by the pioneers covered approximately nineteen hundred miles. We followed the track quite closely nearly all the way but by taking numerous cut-offs shortened the distance considerably.

At the start we pointed direct to the Columbia gap through the Cascade Mountains. Over the great stream down which the pioneers had floated on rafts or in boats, our airplane flew past the sunken forests, which from the airplane we could not see, then on over the "Bridge of the Gods," of Indian legend, between the great towering mountains with numerous waterfalls — one, the Multnomah, eight hundred feet.

We knew the echo of the roar of the plane was but a short way behind but we could not hear it for the

near-by din that filled our ears to the deafening point. Finally emerging out of the mountain gap into the open with its more glaring sunlight, we passed over and could see as a thread the roaring waters of The Dalles of the Columbia, where that mighty river turns on edge through a channel but 145 feet wide.

As we passed, my mind wandered back to 1805 to the days when Lewis and Clark, those intrepid explorers, ran their canoes through the disturbed waters, a feat never before nor since accomplished. What great men they were — so few their equals in any generation!

We passed over the Blue Mountains at an altitude of six thousand feet, encountering a flurry of snow and head wind. I had fallen asleep when suddenly a jar of the plane woke me with the sensation that I had left my seat or the seat had left me, I couldn't tell which; but I quickly realized why the strap bound me so close. We had encountered an air pocket — a vacuum in mid-air — and had dropped, as Lieutenant Kelly estimated, a hundred feet or more. For a moment such an incident will startle one; but it was over in an instant. Seeing the intrepid aviator was undisturbed — no more than an auto driver would be at running into a deep rut — I settled back again. The lieutenant told me afterward that during his eight years' experience in the air he had had a good many such air jolts.

On we went as on the wings of the wind, a hundred miles an hour, fifty times as fast as when we threaded the old trail through the dust and sage-spread plains

of the Snake River valley, which lay below. And soon we had spanned the four hundred miles of space from Vancouver to Pocatello. At six o'clock we began to circle around the latter city, the gateway, so-called, into Idaho. In searching for a landing place, around and around we went, and every turn with plane tipping, it seemed to me, at least forty-five degrees, reminding me again why the strap was in front of me and making me wonder why the plane did not tip over. But it didn't; yet it did supply a thrill for a novice, who remembered afterward having grabbed the sides of the plane, not trusting entirely to the strap.

Finally Lieutenant Kelly selected a large alfalfa field in which to land. We gracefully descended and began to bump and bump until we came to a stop. In a moment more we were on terra firma again. A brisk, welcome walk of half a mile to a waiting automobile gave me my land legs again. Then came a five-mile drive over a bumpy road into Pocatello, where I was reminded that I had traveled over four hundred miles before breakfast.

I did justice to a late meal. And, by the way, this experience was repeated every day of the trip without discomfort and without detriment to my health. In fact, I believe that I was in better trim at the end of the trip than at the beginning of it, so I consider adopting the rule of one meal a day. I have long since experienced that at my advanced age (ninety-seven) three meals a day are too much for me, and have adopted the practice of omitting breakfast, with a decided benefit to my health. It has been recorded

that the Roman soldiers ate but once a day, and they were as robust fighters as any in history.

From Pocatello, near where the first sermon west of the Rocky Mountains was preached by that great missionary, Jason Lee, we passed up the Port Neuf River, on over the divide to Soda Springs. Thence looking south up the silvery ribbon of the Bear River for about thirty miles, we saw the Bear Lake. On and on we went till we were above old Fort Bridger, up to which point we had followed strictly the old Oregon Trail. Here, however, we left the famous way to the West, sailing on over the line of the Union Pacific Railroad, some sixty to ninety miles south of where the Oregon Trail goes through the South Pass and by Casper, Wyoming, and old Fort Laramie.

Our next landing was at Rock Springs at the plane field used regularly by the daily air mail planes. After a short stay at this place we were on our bird way again and finally we reached North Platte, to swoop down again for the night. Here again I was on the old trail over which I had driven my ox team toward the west seventy-two years before. The next day we flew on along the Platte River until we reached Omaha and the Missouri — the old boundary line that marked the end of civilization in the long-ago days. From there we sped on over the rolling hills of Iowa and the prairies of Illinois, and then over my old home state of Indiana until we finally came into the Buckeye State, where I was born nearly a hundred years ago.

You will notice that we made at times more than a hundred miles an hour. Seventy-two years before,

in 1852, I had driven an ox team over substantially the same route at two miles an hour. Can you believe it? Or is it only a fairy tale? Little did I think, when a boy flying my kite, or when we boys were playing the game "flap your wings and fly," jumping from the high beam of the barn into the hay-mow, that some day we might float in the air for hours or even days.

A sight that is long to be remembered greeted us upon our arrival at the aviation field near Dayton. A hundred airplanes, a dozen or more of them in the air; fifty to sixty thousand people — a perfect sea of faces; the racing airplanes whizzing past the observation stand with a roar to be heard for miles; an elevated stand thronged with newspaper men; and a radio station to broadcast the result of the races to the multitude present and afar (can we think of this as other than a fairy tale?); the miniature city of skyscrapers too — all combined to make a sight worth going across the continent to see.

After our welcome we witnessed the destruction of the city which had been set up to show the possibilities, or rather the probabilities, of future wars. First airplanes passed, leaving a smoke screen which completely shut out the view of the city. Later came other planes dropping bombs; first came partial destruction of the city, and finally the skyscrapers began to topple, and soon the city was a heap of smoking ruin. The great airship, the *Shenandoah*, largest in the world, driven by four Liberty motors of combined sixteen hundred horse power, passed majestically over the field and sailed



President Coolidge and Ezra Meeker on the White House grounds in the autumn of 1924.

away until it was lost to view. It was a demonstration of marvels and wonders, yet not more wonderful than the mighty work of those American pioneers who had blazed the way for these wondrous achievements in the field of aviation — the Wright brothers.

A hop of four hundred miles on from Dayton brought us to our nation's capital. Here my air trip ended. President Coolidge received me cordially and posed for a picture alongside of me. Then I left Washington by train for New York, homeward bound. Seventeen years before I had driven into

our capital in my prairie schooner with my ox team to be welcomed by President Roosevelt and receive his blessings and approval on the enterprise I had then undertaken — to monument the old Oregon Trail and endeavor to reestablish it as a national highway and a military road.



Ezra Meeker's last photograph, taken in Detroit in November, 1928.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

OVER THE GREAT DIVIDE

The rest of the story of Ezra Meeker's efforts to honor the pioneers could not be told by the aged pioneer himself. He was nearing the end of his life when the last of the preceding chapters were being written. All the energy he had left must be devoted to the task of directing the activities of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association. So the story at this point has been taken up by the collaborator who worked with Mr. Meeker on the task of preparing and publishing the whole.

"TIME becomes so precious to one who has lived long," Mr. Meeker one day in his ninety-seventh year said to the writer. "I cannot hope to be

granted much more of life here on earth. Oh, why can I not have my hands freed to carry on the great cause? If only I could get out on the old trail again and into the West I know I could gather strength to see it all through." It fretted him sorely to feel his life slipping away without the full realization of his dreams.

But about this time a way was opened for the old pioneer to make one more dramatic effort for the cause that he held dear. This opportunity came through the building of his "Oxmobile." Once again he was going to go out on the old trail, as he had wished.

Henry Ford made this new venture possible by donating the chassis of one of his finest trucks to the Association. Money was provided for Mr. Meeker to build on the chassis a replica of an old prairie schooner. How the aged man did become a boy again as he superintended this work! Employing some skilled artisans in one of the shops in upper Manhattan, he spent his time from early until late planning and directing the construction. It took several weeks, but when it was done the new covered wagon was true in every detail — except its chassis, or "running gears," as the pioneers would have called them — to the typical prairie schooner that had crossed the Plains nearly a century before.

All preparations were made for another trek across the continent. Before turning westward, however, Mr. Meeker felt that he must go into old New England to rouse the Americans there to a realization of the part that our historic Northeast had

played in the conquest of the great Northwest. It was out of Rhode Island that Captain Robert Gray, the discoverer of the Columbia, had come. Nat Wyeth, the founder of Fort Hall, was a Bostonian. Eliza Spalding, one of the first two white women to cross the continent, was from old Connecticut. Every New England state had given its brave sons and daughters to the West. Why should the people there not have an active interest in honoring their heroes and heroines who had carried America across a continent?

Taking a university student to play the part of chauffeur and general assistant, Ezra Meeker struck out through New England. He challenged interest as always wherever he went, but from a financial standpoint the trip was discouraging. It did bring him one experience, however, that was very valuable to him — personal contact with Henry Ford.

This meeting took place at the old Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts. When the old pioneer rode in his Oxmobile up to the historic inn that Mr. Ford had restored, Mr. and Mrs. Ford happened to be there. A kindred interest immediately sprang up between the veteran of ox-team days and the automobile magnate, whose hobby is the saving of American history in vitalized forms. Mrs. Ford also was impressed with the snowy-haired man who had lived to see nearly a century of progress.

After an exchange of courtesies, Mr. Ford remarked, "You must bring your Oxmobile out to my plant at Dearborn and let my men fit it up with Lincoln shock-absorbers and other conveniences.

I'd like to make it more comfortable for a man of your years."

The kindly invitation was accepted with gratitude. A few weeks later the old pioneer was back in New York bidding good-by to his co-workers there just before setting out on his last journey over the old trail to the West. He struck first straight for the Ford factory in Michigan. Rose Jay Schwartz, secretary of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, took the train a day or so following to make arrangements for his reception there. Arriving at Dearborn, she was given a most gracious welcome, and the word was sent forth among the workmen and others in the city of the prospective visit of the old Oregon Trail veteran.

He came on schedule time, but he arrived there very ill. Mr. Ford, learning of the old pioneer's condition, immediately directed that he be sent to the hospital and given the best of medical attention and the best of nurses. Mr. Ford spared no pains to bring the old veteran back to health. For a time the aged patient wavered between life and death, but again his amazing vitality won the day. In a few weeks he was back on his feet, with strength enough to walk out into the sunshine. He went straight to his Oxmobile, and while he was there looking over the modernized covered wagon, someone took what was his last photograph.

A flash of his old dauntless spirit returning, the intrepid pioneer expressed his determination to go on again over the old Oregon Trail. Guthrie Barber, treasurer of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association,

was there, however, to dissuade him. Purchasing a railroad ticket, and securing a stateroom in a Pullman, he finally induced the veteran to take this easier way, by which he soon arrived home, all but spent.

For about three weeks he carried on, but with ever-weakening steps. Then came the day when he did not leave his room. He lingered there for a few days, surrounded by his children and friends. Finally on the morning of December 3, 1928, less than a month before his ninety-eighth birthday, he passed away.

Over all the land flashed the word that Ezra Meeker, the dauntless American pioneer, had gone over the Great Divide. The press everywhere carried stories of his life and editorials expressive of appreciation for his valorous spirit and for the great cause he had brought into being. It was manifest that he had won an honored place in the hearts of all America.

From those who knew him best — the people of his home state, both the citizens of his home city and those of Puyallup, the town he had founded in pioneer days — came most touching tributes. Out of the museum in Tacoma, Washington, was brought the old prairie schooner he had used in reblazing the old Oregon Trail, and a yoke of young oxen was hitched to the historic conveyance. On the day when the old pioneer was laid away by the side of his wife in the Puyallup cemetery, the school children of that city filled the covered wagon with flowers and accompanied it to the final resting place of Ezra Meeker.



At the Independence Rock celebration. Five of the men who helped carry our nation "across a continent." Reading from left to right: Boney Earnest, Brigham H. Roberts, Fin G. Burnett, William H. Jackson, Andrew Jensen.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE PIONEER'S DREAM COMES TRUE

ON Washington's Birthday, 1930, the press over our country made announcement of the Covered-Wagon Centennial. President Hoover had officially proclaimed this national observance and commemoration in honor of our pioneers of the West.

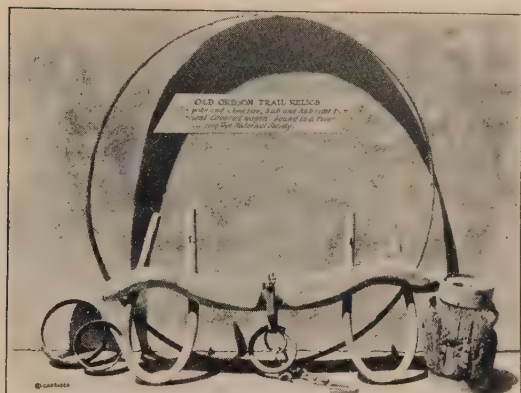
It was out of an understanding heart that the President had made this proclamation from his high office. As an orphan boy he had gone alone from his native state of Iowa out to old Oregon to be reared among relatives who were covered-wagon pioneers. His college days had been spent among the sons and daughters of the pioneers of California.

One of these American girls, whose father was a Forty-niner, became his wife.

The Presidential proclamation did two things in one. It focused the attention of the nation on the stirring story of the westward march of America; it brought forth nation-wide endorsement of the plan for a centennial celebration. The expressions of those from every part of our land, from every class and creed, were one chorus of approval.

Purposeful action in accord with this unanimous endorsement was the result. National and state educational associations immediately presented programs to guide the schools in their participation in the celebration. The leaders of the Boy Scouts laid plans likewise to bring their group of young Americans actively into helping forward the great commemoration. Historical associations, civic clubs, and other patriotic organizations lent active encouragement to the movement. Communities east, west, north, and south began to plan for celebrations inspired with songs, stories, speeches, and pageantry depicting the winning of the West. Veterans of the covered-wagon era who still lingered became the central figures in all this national tribute to the pioneers.

On April 10, 1930, the Covered-Wagon Centennial was opened with splendid celebrations. St. Louis rightly led in this initial commemoration; for on April tenth, a hundred years before, the train that blazed the wagon road to the edge of old Oregon left that gateway city of the West. Little did the frontiersmen who accompanied this covered-wagon



Courtesy of the Wyoming Historical Society

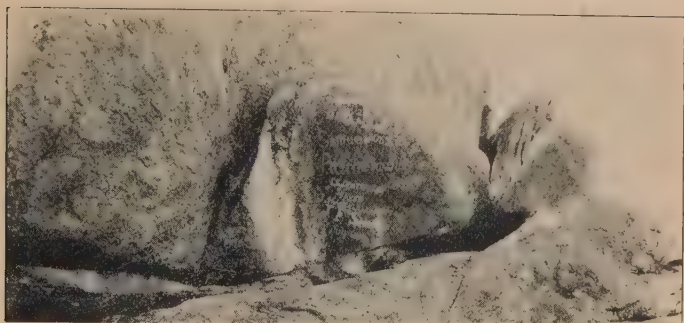
Ox yoke, wheel tire, hub, and hub rims from an old covered wagon. Found in a river bed.

train realize that they were turning our Western history into new channels.

The West was won for our country largely by means of the covered wagon and the humble ox team. It could never have been settled, as was the East, largely by means of the waterways. The streams of the plains and mountains are swift and uncertain. It took Lewis and Clark more than two years to make their mackinaw-boat and canoe journey up the tortuous old Missouri and its branches and down the Clearwater, the Snake, and the Columbia to the Pacific and back to St. Louis. The Astorians, who first opened the Oregon Trail to the world, had met with tragedy when they attempted even with skilled voyageurs to run the rapids of the Snake, or "Mad River," as they called it. Further disasters of the fur hunters had made them finally give up the waterways for the wagon road.

The mountaineers thus blazed a large part of the Oregon Trail as a wagon-way for the home-building settlers. Mothers and children could be carried into the Far West in covered wagons. Where mothers and children go, towns spring up, schools are built, churches rise, and civilization thrives. The departure of that first covered-wagon train from frontier St. Louis for the Rockies was, therefore, of far-reaching consequence.

The "spirit of St. Louis" rose to the occasion and made this stirring bit of American history live again. Happily full details of the historic occurrence, as given in a letter by Jedediah Strong Smith, David Jackson, and Captain Billy Sublette, owners of the train, are preserved in the records of our government; so it all could be reënacted with historical accuracy. There were the eighty-one mountaineers, young and old, in their buckskin suits and coonskin caps. There were their ten mule-drawn covered wagons, their two Dearborn buggies, and their saddle horses. Even an old milch cow like one that had been taken way out to the Rockies and back was in the procession, and also a small herd of fat cattle like those driven as a supply of beef until the buffalo grounds were reached. But Bossy and the beef cattle did not take kindly to following the pavement trails amid the shouting crowds; in fact they were all so unruly that they had to be taken out of the parade even before it got well under way. The covered-wagon train, however, after good-bys from wives and sweethearts in costumes of pioneer days, moved away from the historic courthouse which had wit-



De Luxe Studio

Inscribed names on Independence Rock, the "Register of the Plains," cut during covered-wagon days.

nessed a similar scene in the long-ago days. Along thronged streets it followed practically the same route as the first wagon train to the outskirts of the city. Over it all floated a dirigible, while airplanes hummed their song of a hundred years of progress.

This stirring celebration with which the Covered-Wagon Centennial was opened was but the beginning of a series of impressive celebrations throughout the year 1930. In every part of the land, not only on April tenth but on other days of historical significance in the winning of our West, the people paid tribute to the pioneers. May second, the birthday of Old Oregon, when in 1843 a little band of stalwart Americans organized in face of opposition the first American civil government west of the Rockies, was remembered with fitting ceremonies. Utah's birthday, July twenty-fourth, when in 1847 the vanguard of the pioneers of that state began the great work of redeeming by means of irrigation the deserts of the West, was celebrated by sons and daughters

*Elmer Underwood*

Mr. Jackson, the artist who made many of the paintings used in this book, talking to an interested audience at the dedication of the Scout marker at Independence Rock, July 5, 1930.

of those pioneers over all our land. The birthdays of other Western states were also made occasion for impressive programs and pageantry. And with all these varied expressions came another celebration of national scope — the dedication of old Independence Rock, on Independence Day, to the memory of the brave men and women who won and held our West.

Picture this old landmark itself — the most famous of all on the Oregon-Mormon-California Trail. By the side of that great trunk line of western migration, on the historic Sweetwater River in central Wyoming, it stands — a great dome of granite, nearly three hundred feet high and almost a mile in circumference. On its surface, polished by glaciers ages ago, are carved fully four thousand names of those who

paused by this sheltering rock in the desert when the old trail was athrob with travel. No one can ever know how many thousands of men, women, and children passed the old rock during the westward and eastward surge of the covered-wagon days. The record still may be seen, however, in the old trail itself, worn deep by weary "pilgrim feet," gripping hoofs, and grinding wheels, across the miles and miles of sage-spread plains.

Visualize the scene on the evening of July 3, 1930, when the dedicatory celebration begins.

The sun has just gone down, leaving the great rock lighted by the golden afterglow. On the sloping western side of it, in a kind of amphitheater, nearly a thousand Boy Scouts from all over the land have seated themselves; a thin line of veterans of the covered-wagon days are at the front of the assemblage, while hundreds of interested citizens are massed



Participants in the Independence Rock celebration.

all around. On the open flat below is a circular encampment, tents and tepees, reminding one of the earlier days when this historic camp ground was alive with pioneers headed westward.

Now the calls and songs of the lusty young Americans wake the long-silent echoes. Stories of the old trail are told. Then an Indian chieftain rises on one of the huge rock fragments, and, silhouetted against the evening sky, sings a beautiful love song of the red man. As the echoes die away, another thrill comes when a gray-haired pioneer tells to the eager listeners a story out of his own life — a story of how, when as an orphan boy he was crossing the Plains, the Sioux Indians stole in and stampeded half their oxen.

We had stopped for noon on La Bonte Creek, and turned our oxen loose to graze. It was a hot day, and another boy and I decided to have a swim. While we were enjoying ourselves in the stream, we suddenly heard a kind of hissing and rattling. Looking up, we saw an Indian lying alongside his pony working in among our cattle to excite them. Petrified with fear, we stood a moment; then we caught sight of several other redskins at the same game. In a panic we leaped out of the water, and dashed naked up the hill to tell the captain of our train. He was inclined to laugh at us, but climbing upon the wagon tongue to take a look, he saw half our herd stampeding over the hills with a band of whooping Indians behind them.

The first thought of the captain was to save the women and children, and he ordered the men to run the wagons together for protection. This done he sent some of them on what horses we had after the thieves. They reached the crest of the hill only to find several hundred Indians daring them to come on. Nothing could be done but to take the bitter loss and cripple on over the mountains with the few oxen we had left.

As the applause that greeted the veteran's tale died down, another sound, like an echo to his story — the ominous thumping of tom-toms — came out of the night, and then the forms of painted and feathered Indians stealing into the light of the camp fire blazing on the flat just below. With savage yells they began to dance the scalp dance around the leaping flames, bringing the wild spirit of the lost days back with vivid reality. Then, as they stole away again into the darkness, a flare of red light drew all eyes to the crest of the great rock. There in the glow was a group of Boy Scouts holding aloft the Stars and Stripes, waving under the moonlit sky.



Bronze plaque set in Independence Rock.

The Fourth of July was made memorable by further ceremonies. By ten o'clock thousands of interested citizens had assembled themselves around the bold, north face of the great rock where a flag-draped platform had been erected, and on which sat about a score of pioneers with state officials and officers of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association and of the Boy Scouts of America. The vast assemblage had to stand or sit on the open plain under the burning rays of the sun; yet there they remained intent on the program, inspired by patriotic

music and addresses, participating with full heart in the dedication of historic old Independence Rock to the memory of the pathfinders and pioneers who made the courageous conquest of the West.

One impressive part of the program was the unveiling of a bronze plaque with the likeness of Ezra Meeker, set in the face of the rock. George D. Pratt, the donor, made the presentation; and Howard R. Driggs, president of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, accepted this generous gift and gracious tribute to the old pioneer for all the host of brave men and women typified by the dauntless pioneer. Among other things he said:

This is a positive and beautiful response to the words which Ezra Meeker, when passing away, whispered to his daughter — "I am not quite ready to go. My work is unfinished." It is a testimonial which declares in unmistakable terms that the great cause for which he gave "his last full measure of devotion" "shall not perish from the earth."

The work to which this old pioneer was clinging up to his dying breath was the memorialization of America's greatest trail. He wanted to save for all time in its truthfulness the epic story of the westward march of this nation.

This cause was dearer to him than life itself. No wonder! He had traversed the old trail with his wife and babe and friends. He had felt the valiant spirit of the winners of the West; he had participated in the joys and sorrows of the pioneers. His own mother lay buried somewhere along the old trail. His brother was drowned in the Sweetwater just up there where the stream plunges through old Devil's Gate. It was these and a thousand other tender memories that impelled him, after he had passed his allotted three score and ten years, to reblaze

OBSERVANCE OF THE COVERED-WAGON CENTENNIAL

BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A Proclamation

The Congress by unanimous vote has authorized commemoration of the heroism of the fathers and mothers who traversed the Oregon Trail to the Far West. On April 10, 1830, the first wagon train left St. Louis for Oregon, pioneering the way for the thousands of men and women who settled the Pacific States. On December 29, 1830, Ezra Meeker was born, who carried over into our day the personal memory of this historic epoch. The Oregon Trail Memorial Association, which he founded and which includes men and women in all walks of life in all parts of the country, has sponsored the movement to observe the period from April 10 to December 29 of this year as the Covered-Wagon Centennial, to recall the national significance of this centenary of the great westward tide which established American civilization across a continent.

Therefore, I, HERBERT HOOVER, President of the United States, do call upon our people to employ this fitting occasion to commemorate the lives and deeds of the heroic pioneers who won and held the West.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

DONE at the city of Washington this twenty-first day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirty, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the one hundred and fifty-fourth.

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

BY THE PRESIDENT

(Signed) J. P. COTTON

Acting Secretary of State

that fading old trail and to strive to the very last to rouse America to save the sacred story of the Western pioneers.

We do well to remember him with special tribute here today. Yet I know that Ezra Meeker would have this honor paid not to him alone, but to all the pioneers who won the West. And in the presence of these precious few who have honored us with their attendance at this great national commemoration, I hereby receive this tribute, with a pledge for all those here assembled, that the valiant men and women who "established our civilization across a continent" shall not go unremembered.

Toward evening of this memorable Fourth of July another beautiful service in honor of the pioneers was performed near old Devil's Gate, about five miles west of Independence Rock. Here by the side of the historic trail the professional and business women of Casper, Wyoming, had placed an artistic marker. With tender and fitting ceremony it was dedicated to the memory of the pioneer women who lie in unmarked graves. Mrs. Tom Sun, a pioneer mother, who for years has lived on a picturesque ranch on the Sweetwater, and her little granddaughter, a Girl Scout, unveiled the marker; Ruth May Fox, a Mormon mother who as a girl had walked across the Plains and past this spot with the pioneers, gave an address. Just across the old ranch fence among the grass and sage nearly fifty little flags waved gently in the evening breezes over the lowly unnamed graves.

Ezra Meeker's dream of marking the old trail, of preserving the historic shrines along the way, and of perpetuating the memory of the pioneers was being fulfilled.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE HUNDREDTH-BIRTHDAY DINNER

THE members of the Board of Directors of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association gathered just before Thanksgiving in 1930. They had met to hear of the progress of the Covered-Wagon Centennial and to lay plans for the future. In concluding his part of the report of the events of the eventful year, the president of the association recalled Ezra Meeker's first experience in broadcasting and read the address the old pioneer had made seven years before to a radio audience. His tribute to the pioneers and the patient oxen, his appeal to the nation to pay its tardy tribute to those stalwart Americans who had opened the way to the West, and his genial invitation to all to attend his hundredth-birthday dinner — with the proviso that they must pay for their own dinner or bring it with them — came like the spirit of Ezra Meeker speaking.

"That is an invitation that we should accept," said one of the directors.

"I move that we sponsor an all-American banquet to celebrate Ezra Meeker's hundredth birthday," said another.

"We could have no more fitting close for the Covered-Wagon Centennial," agreed a third, seconding the motion.

It was passed unanimously, and the plan was set going immediately to carry through the suggestion. Anne Morgan was chosen as chairman of a committee to plan the celebration.

On the evening of December twenty-ninth nearly four hundred guests from all parts of America gathered to do honor to the pioneers. At the speakers' table was one vacant chair — placed there for Ezra Meeker, the guest of honor. And, as other guests of honor, there were a few of the pioneers themselves, the daughter of a Sioux chieftain and another talented young Indian woman to represent our first Americans, the pioneer leader of the Boy Scouts, together with famous artists, sculptors, and musicians — descendants of covered-wagon pioneers.

Letters and messages carrying greetings from a score of governors of various states were announced. Among the expressions of good will was one from the chief executive of Ohio, the birth state of Ezra Meeker, expressing this tribute to the "Buckeye Boy" whose hundredth birthday was being commemorated :

In April, 1907, Mr. Meeker visited Columbus in his trip across the continent with an ox team. He spent two weeks here. In an address delivered in the Chamber of Commerce, after presenting his plans for the marking of the old Oregon Trail, he advocated the building of a trans-continental highway to facilitate automobile transportation from ocean to ocean. At that time his views on the practicability of such a road were regarded as rather visionary. In 1916, however, he made another visit to the State, this time in an automobile, on his journey across the continent. This indicates the rapid advance in transportation in the nine years that followed his address in Columbus. All these improvements he himself approved, and enjoyed. From his home in Oregon he came at the age of ninety-four in an airplane to the great aviation meet

in Dayton, October 10, 1924. An editorial in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* accorded him the high honor of being the most noted guest on that great occasion. The opening sentences of this spirited editorial read :

Many interesting features distinguished the great air race meeting of Dayton, Ohio, but, we fancy, none of the remarkable feats, sights, scenes, or incidents was more genuinely inspiring or thrilling than the arrival at McCook Field of Ezra Meeker, ninety-four-year-old pioneer of the Oregon Trail.

Out of the sky dropped this trail-maker of the nation's swaddling days, a rugged, bearded Argonaut who has lived to see the development of such imperial national progress as few mortals have known.

The editorial concluded :

Those who saw him, perhaps, looked upon him as a tired, wondering old man, but he carried on his forehead the ineffaceable sign placed by the Genius of America on the brows of all her heroic sons.

The closing words of the governor were :

I regret all the more keenly my inability to be present on this occasion, because Ezra Meeker was a native of Ohio, born in this State in 1830, and hailed in his later years as Ohio's most illustrious pioneer. We are all glad to pay honor to his memory and to commend the Association that has linked his name with the historic trans-continental trail and the pioneers who added a thrilling and beneficent chapter to the history of our Republic.

Very respectfully
(Signed) MYERS Y. COOPER
Governor

STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
December 19, 1930

Addresses followed, interpreting concretely the significance of the occasion. The president of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, after reviewing briefly Ezra Meeker's life story, his reblazing of the Oregon Trail, and his other challenging ventures to keep the cause of the pioneers before the nation, gave this message to America :

The great work to which Ezra Meeker clung to the last moment of his life was something far more vital than the mere marking of a pioneer trail. His goal was the preservation of our historical heritage. He strove to keep alive the spirit of real Americanism as it was exemplified in the lives of the heroic men and women who carried America westward. These pioneers knew no such word as *fail*. Ezra Meeker was one of this breed of stalwart Americans. Realizing this, we do not wonder he should lament in passing that his work was not done. One fine thing he did accomplish, however, and that was to plant the cause he so dearly loved in the warm heart of America.

It is a cause, indeed, that belongs to all America. In the making of our great West, America was made. We add only glory to the revered founders of this republic when we point out the fact that our nation came to its splendid self-realization only when the sons and daughters of the Revolution crossed the Alleghenies and began to carve empire states out of the great untamed commonwealth that had been won during our fight for freedom. By the valor of the daring American pioneers who carried the conquest into the West, thirty-five states have been added to the immortal thirteen.

The epic story of the winning of our West cuts across all sectional lines. That story, saved in its vibrant verities, offers a force to promote national unity and good will. It clears away artificial barriers, interlinking every state with all the others in bonds of true kinship, ties of heroic tradi-

tion. It illumines the meaning and spirit of real Americanism. It inspires confidence and courage for the pioneering adventures of this new day.

The vital question arises: Shall the great work, launched with such fervor by Ezra Meeker, and carried forward with such high promise up to the present, go on? The answer rests with the descendants and the friends of the American pioneers.

I feel that I voice your hearts when I say that it shall go on. The old pioneer trails will be marked. Strategic spots along them will be turned into historic shrines where young and old may linger and learn the story of America's making. A fitting memorial will one day rise in our nation's capital to the memory of the heroes and heroines who won our West. The schools of our country will expand and enrich their courses to teach an all-American history. Artists and sculptors, poets and musicians, will cast the vibrant epic of the westward march of America into forms that will make it reach and hold the heart of humanity.



Howard R. Driggs

Sunset on the old Oregon Trail, near Independence Rock,
Wyoming.

THE DREAM OF THE STAR

A song for the men who blazed the way
With hearts that would not quail !
They made brave quest of the wild Northwest ;
They cut the Oregon Trail.

Back of them beckoned their kith and kin
And all that they held their own ;
Front of them spread the wilderness dread,
And ever the vast unknown.

But ever they kept their forward course,
And never they thought to lag,
For over them flew the Red, White, and Blue,
And the dream of a star for the flag !

A cheer for the men who cut the trail !
With souls as firm as steel
And fiery as wrath they hewed the path
For the coming commonweal.

And close on the heels of the pioneers
The eager throng closed in
And followed the road to a far abode,
An empire new to win.

And so they wrought at the end of the trail,
As ever must brave men do,
Till out of the dark there gleamed a spark,
And the dream of the star came true.

A toast to the men who made the road !
And a health to the men who dwell
In the great new land by the heroes planned,
Who have builded it wide and well !

The temple stands where the pine tree stood,
And dim is the ancient trail,
But many and wide are the roads that guide,
And stanch are the ships that sail !

For the land is a grand and goodly land,
And its fruitful fields are tilled
By the sons who see on the flag of the free
The dream of the star fulfilled !

ROBERTUS LOVE

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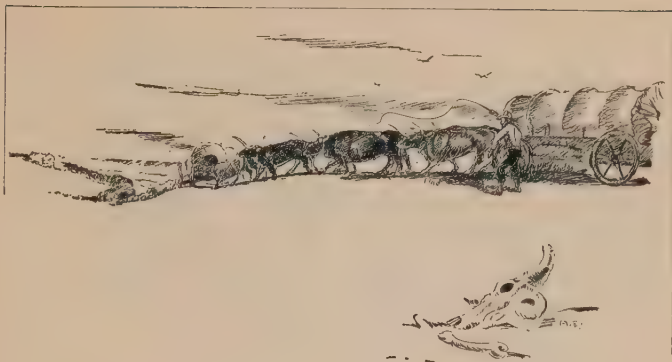
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